REMARKS

ON THE

TWO LAST CHAPTERS

OF

MR. GIBBON's HISTORY

OF THE

DECLINE AND FALL

OF THE

ROMAN EMPIRE.

BY JAMES CHELSUM, D. D.

STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH OXFORD,

AND CHAPLAIN TO THE HONOURABLE AND RIGHT

REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER.

THE SECOND EDITION, greatly enlarged.

——*Cumque talis prodiſſet, ut præſtigiis quibuſdam admirandis facile poſſet imponere lectori vel imperito, vel ſimplici, vel parum attento, non fuit conſilium prorſus obticeſcere.*

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GEO. HORNE, Vice Can.

Jan. 3. 1778.

To the Honourable and Moſt Reverend

FREDERIC

Lord Archbiſhop of Canterbury

Primate of all England

And Metropolitan

The following Remarks

Written in Defence of Chriſtianity

Are humbly inſcribed

As a public Teſtimony of

The ſincereſt Reſpect and Gratitude

By his Grace's moſt dutiful Servant

The AUTHOR.

The PREFACE.

BEFORE we enter upon an examination of Mr. Gibbon's Inquiry into the progreſs and eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, it will be proper to aſſign the motives that have led to the undertaking. It may not be improper alſo to add previouſly a few remarks on the ſelection of his materials. Should it appear that our ingenious Author has at one time withheld his confidence where it was ſtrictly due, and at another placed it injudiciouſly, it will not ſo far be difficult to diſcover the true origin of thoſe frequent pictures interſperſed throughout the work, which, to borrow an expreſſion from our Author, " betray by their

" dark colouring, and diſtorted features, " the pencil of an enemy." [1]

It is obvious, that in compiling a Hiſtory of the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity the early Fathers of the Church, next to the ſacred Writings themſelves, deſerve partilar attention. They lived in thoſe ages, they are therefore competent witneſſes of the tranſactions that paſſed in them. They were men of unblemiſhed integrity; they were often eye-witneſſes of the facts which they relate. We muſt naturally therefore have recourſe to their writings as one of the principal ſources of authentic intelligence.

The Fathers of the Church are accordingly often referred to by our Author. But he at the ſame time ſeems unhappily to have entertained a general diſtruſt of theſe reſpectable witneſſes, ſince he remarks even in the very beginning of his inquiry, that the " ſcanty and *ſuſpicious* materials of eccleſiaſ- " tical hiſtory ſeldom enable us to diſpel

[1] Ch. xv. p. 514.

" the

" the dark cloud that hangs over the firſt " age of the Church"; [2] and in the cloſe of his volume the writings of the Fathers ſeem to be plainly deſcribed under the title of " the doubtful and imperfect monuments " of ancient credulity." [3] That groſs miſrepreſentation of the character of Euſebius, the venerable Parent of Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, which our Author has openly inſiſted on, [4] has obviouſly alſo prevented him from paying ſuch a degree of attention to his very valuable hiſtory as it juſtly merited. It will not be ſufficient here to allege a few inſtances of apparent credulity in ſome of the Fathers, in order to fix a general charge of ſuſpicion on all.

If the Fathers themſelves have ſuffered undeſervedly in our Author's opinion, two

[2] Ch. xv. p. 449.

[3] Ch. xvi. p. 586.

[4] Ch. xvi. (p. 583.) he ſpeaks of Euſebius as " a writer who has openly violated one of the fun- " damental laws of hiſtory." For a vindication of his hiſtory, ſee p. 220—232. of this Treatiſe.

eminent modern writers who have treated of them at large have on the other hand alſo been far too eagerly admired. It is much to be lamented that men ſuch as Dr. Middleton and the learned Barbeyrac, themſelves the declared Friends of Chriſtianity, ſhould yet have been inſtrumental in detracting unjuſtly from the credit of it's firſt Profeſſors. Incautious quotations of detached paſſages from the writings of the Fathers form the principal ground-work of their accuſations. Dr. Middleton can ſcarcely be acquitted of a ſtill heavier charge than a mere want of caution.

His work is ſtiled by our Author " a " very free and ingenious inquiry, which " *though it has met with the moſt favourable* " *reception from the public*, appears to have " excited a general ſcandal among the di- " vines of our own as well as the other " Proteſtant Churches of Europe." [5] I will not aſſert here that an oppoſition is in-

[5] Ch. xv. p. 476.

tended

tended between *the divines*, and *the public*, with a view to inſinuate illiberally that the former were influenced by a profeſſional bias, but I ſeem fully intitled to conclude that our Author takes the ſide of the public, according to the ideas that he has formed of it's judgment. It will be ſhewn hereafter, what miſrepreſentations his attachment to this writer appears to have led him into. [6]

His approbation of Profeſſor Barbeyrac's Treatiſe on the Morality of the Fathers is ſtill more openly delivered. He refers us to it in general as a " very judicious treatiſe," [7] and the many examples of the ſentiments of the Fathers which appear obviouſly to have been ſelected from it, mark his farther regard for the performance. An appeal to the performance itſelf may ſhew whether it deſerves ſuch reſpect.

[6] See from page 67 to 91.
[7] Note 85. p. lxx.

It

It is the confeſſion of the Author himſelf that " he has purpoſely choſen inſtances " that had been already produced, and " which were to be found in very common " books." [8] Whatever circumſtances determined him to follow this plan, the event at leaſt has ſhewn that thro' his confidence in theſe " very common books" many groundleſs accuſations have been exhibited againſt the Fathers.

An accurate compariſon of his aſſertions with the original paſſages ſoon led to a diſcovery that he had been very grievouſly impoſed on by the falſe friends to whom he had truſted. [9] And he has himſelf ac-

[8] J'avois declarè moi même que j'avois choiſi tout exprés des exemples qui ont eté deja produits, et qui ſe trouvent remarquez dans des Livres tres communs. Traitè ſur la Morale de Peres. Ch. 1. p. 11. (Edit. d'Amſterdam. 1728.)

[9] See Dr. Grey's tract, entitled " the Spirit of " Infidelity detected," in anſwer to " the Spirit of " the ancient Fathers of the Church examined" taken from Mons'r. Barbeyrac's work. See alſo the viith Chap-

cordingly retracted ſome of his own aſſertions in the enlarged edition of his work. [1] The manner in which he has acknowledged himſelf deceived, would have done him real honour [2] had he acknowledged himſelf deceived through his own fault. In the preſent caſe the common fallibility of man cannot juſtly be pleaded. In the words of Dr. Waterland, "it is no excuſe for a "perſon of Learning and abilities, that he "ſuffered himſelf to be impoſed upon by

ter of Dr. Waterland's Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and the works of Cellier and the excellent Buddeus.

[1] His Sentiments on the Morality of the Fathers were firſt of all delivered incidentally only in his Hiſtorical Account of the Science of Morality prefixed to Puffendorf's Treatiſe on the Law of Nature. They were afterwards formed into a ſeparate work, (entitled as above) in conjunction with his Anſwers to the objections of Cellier.

[2] "Avouer qu'on s'eſt trompè, et avouer qu'on "eſt homme, c'eſt ſelon moi, la même choſe."

Preface, p. xlii.

"others

" others in a matter which required care " and faithfulneſs." [3]

But how ſhall we be aſtoniſhed then, when the ſame writer thus confeſſedly ſenſible of the general fallibility of Man, appears to have run the riſque of being deceived by others a ſecond time, after having already found himſelf deceived. In his own words, " if any one can convince me " by juſt reaſoning, that I have ſaid any " thing to the diſadvantage of the Fathers, " which is either inaccurate, or really ex- " aggerated, whether I may have ſpoken " *after others*, or from myſelf, I feel I have " ſufficient courage to retract immediately." [4] The avowal is generous as to it's main

[3] Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, Ch. vii. p. 415.

[4] " Cependant, ſi l'on peut me convaincre par " de bonnes raiſons, que j'aie rien dit au deſavantage " des Peres, qui ſoit peu exact ou veritablement " outrè, ſoit que j'aie parlè *apres d'autres*, ou de moi- " même, je me ſens aſſez de courage, pour me re- " tracter inceſſamment." Preface (to the work in it's laſt form) p. xlii.

intent

intent, and worthy of ſo reſpectable a character. But it muſt ſtill be aſked, why incur at all the unneceſſary danger of *retracting*, by ſtill ſpeaking *after others*; why again forget that no confidence ſhould be put in the reports of others, when the original writings themſelves might, and ought to have been conſulted?

The words of a very ſuperiour writer, who has not feared to employ his pen even in ſo unpopular a cauſe, as that of the Fathers, may ſerve yet farther to give a true idea of the *judicious* treatiſe of Mons'r. Barbeyrac. "Let us lay aſide prejudice on "either hand, and we ſhall ſee enough to "perſuade us that diſputers who have little "more in view than to ſupport a favourite "charge, will not always be careful to pre-"ſerve their candor. In the heat of a pro-"ſecution, proofs will be apt to be over-"ſtrained: but admit the facts to be fairly "repreſented; what conſiderate man will "think himſelf able to form a true judg-"ment of a character, when no more of it

" is laid before him than *a collection of it's* " *blots and blemiſhes?* [5] It is this ſort of collection *only* that is laid before us in Mons'r. Barbeyrac's treatiſe. Thoſe paſſages in the writings of the Fathers which do credit to their judgment in point of morality, and which ſurely demanded attention, are wholly omitted.

May it not be already conjectured then, even from the very ſlight view we have taken of the ſelection of his materials, that our ingenious Author may have been miſled in many inſtances? I ſhould not heſitate to place to the account of other writers, a great part of the miſrepreſentations which occur in his hiſtory, did not his own words call upon me to adopt a different concluſion. " Diligence " and accuracy," ſays our Hiſtorian, " are " the only merits which an hiſtorical writer " may aſcribe to himſelf, if any merit in- " deed can be aſſumed from the perform-

[5] Preface to Bp. Warburton's Julian, p. ix. 2d edit. 1751.

" ance

" ance of an indiſpenſable duty. I may " therefore be allowed to ſay, that I have " *carefully* examined *all* the *original* ma- " terials that could illuſtrate the ſubject " which I had undertaken to treat." [6] After this declaration, however it may naturally be ſuppoſed to admit of exceptions, in inſtances where I would willingly at the moſt only conſider our Author as having been guilty of truſting to falſe friends, I am compelled to conſider him as the avowed patron of many different palpable errours, and as pledging his reputation on the accuracy of his quotations.

From whatever ſource they may have been derived, the miſtakes which occur in the courſe of our Author's Inquiry, are certainly both numerous and of great importance.

It is impoſſible to overlook at the ſame time many ungenerous and indecent ſtrokes

[6] See Advertiſement prefixed to the notes to Mr. Gibbon's Hiſtory.

of irony, and many oblique unmanly inſinuations. Theſe are no leſs foreign to the true ſtile and proper gravity of Hiſtory, than they are unſuitable to thoſe profeſſions of candour which are repeatedly held forth. —But it is the deſign of the preſent undertaking to attend to other objects.

The following remarks owe their riſe to a very diligent inquiry into the fidelity of our Author's quotations. This inquiry ſoon led to a diſcovery of many errours. And it ſeemed neceſſary to point out theſe errours, becauſe they are not found in a ſmall obſcure treatiſe, but are brought forward to view in a work conſiderable in itſelf, and of that ſpecies of writing which naturally lays claim to attention. The work derives additional credit from the ſituation of it's Author, on whom (abſtractedly from it's particular blemiſhes) it reflects real honour to have ſpent thoſe many hours in literary employments, which others of his rank and condition too often dedicate only either to frivolous or to deſtructive purſuits. But the

the very agreeable entertainment which our Author has ſet before us, is unhappily intermixed with a ſubtle poiſon of the moſt dangerous tendency.

When the Author of the following Remarks therefore had obſerved farther what diſtinguiſhed attention had actually been paid to Mr. Gibbon's work, his deſire to furniſh in ſome ſort at leaſt an antidote to the many erroneous poſitions contained in it, prevailed over other conſiderations. He was induced from this motive to ſubmit to the public inſpection remarks which were originally intended for his own private ſatisfaction only. He was induced to ſubmit them even haſtily, and in an imperfect ſtate, without waiting to make farther additions, or to digeſt his materials in a better manner. [7] In one reſpect at leaſt his

[7] The preſent tract was originally publiſhed in the month of October 1776. without the Author's name, under the title of A Letter to a Friend. It contained the firſt public ſtrictures on Mr. Gibbon's work. It having been now thrown a into new form, many

work is now rendered far more worthy attention. It has been honoured with the communications of a diſtinguiſhed writer [8] in the moſt liberal and obliging manner.

It remains only for the Author, to add ſome farther particulars concerning the nature of his work. From the very deſign of it, it has neceſſarily been rendered in ſome meaſure incapable of the ornaments of ſtile;

many paſſages of the former tract are omitted, and others are tranſpoſed. The additions are diſtinguiſhed in the table of Contents. The Reader's convenience has been conſulted alſo, by ſubjoining for the moſt part, in every inſtance where it has ſeemed important, the entire paſſages out of Mr. Gibbon's work, which before, for brevity's ſake, were only referred to by marking the pages.

[8] The Rev. Dr. Randolph, Preſident of C. C. C. and Lady Margaret's Profeſſor of Divinity in the Univerſity of Oxford.—The ſubſtance of his valuable remarks may be found in pages 53, 54, 119.—122, 123.—130, 134.—137, 158.—160, 195.—197, 209, 213.—217, 236.—238.

matter,

and it has been his duty to attend rather to matter, than to words. The diſquiſitions contained in it throughout are far more important than amuſing; and there may be found ſome perhaps that are even tedious, but which will not however be unintereſting to the patient Lover of Truth.

THE

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REMARKS, &c.

IN "an inquiry into the progreſs and "eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity," [1] and into "the conduct of the Roman Govern-"ment towards the Chriſtians" [2], the argument reſulting from the hiſtory of the propagation of Chriſtianity is neceſſarily concerned. An argument which, however other Evidences ſufficiently prove it's divine Origin, ought by no means to be abandoned. Our Author's diſquiſitions tend to weaken the force of this argument; and they ſometimes contain reflections injurious to the cauſe of Chriſtianity in general.

[1] Ch. xv. (p. 449) of Mr. Gibbon's Hiſtory, which when no other work is mentioned, muſt always be underſtood to be referred to.

[2] See Title of the xvith Ch.

On entering therefore into an examination of his aſſertions we muſt firſt make an important diſtinction.

It ſhould be remarked carefully, that it is not his deſign to account for the propagation of Chriſtianity by ſecondary cauſes from it's earlieſt date, but during a particular period only.

The firſt and moſt diſtinguiſhed period of the hiſtory of it's miraculous propagation is not certainly concerned in his diſquiſitions, ſince it is not comprehended in his deſign. He will be found on examination, to have conſidered only that later period which commences after the times of the Apoſtles, and which exhibits to us not the firſt planting, but the ſucceſſive increaſe of Chriſtianity, after it had already taken root and covered a very extenſive tract of country.

If at any time he aſcends higher, he deviates ſtrictly ſpeaking from his proper ſubject.

Our

Our Author has not indeed made any formal declaration from what period he means to inquire into the progreſs of the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, becauſe probably it did not ſeem neceſſary. It muſt naturally be concluded, that he cannot have meant to enter into any earlier diſquiſition on the ſubject than falls within the immediate compaſs of his Hiſtory.

Reſpecting his general plan, he acquaints us that it is his deſign in his three firſt and introductory chapters, "to deſcribe the "proſperous condition of the empire, un-"der Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two "Antonines, and afterwards from the death "of Marcus Antoninus to deduce the moſt "important circumſtances of it's decline and "fall." [3]. But the death of Marcus Antoninus happened towards the cloſe of the ſecond century; and we muſt conclude therefore, even in juſtice to the Hiſtorian himſelf, that this inquiry, as to it's expreſs

[3] Ch. i.

and immediate deſign, cannot be meant to be carried any higher; and is not conſequently at all concerned about the propagation of Chriſtianity in the age of the Apoſtles.

But this age contains the moſt ſtriking period of the hiſtory of the propagation of our religion. — A period, neverthelefs ſo ſhort, that taking it's date before the middle of the firſt century, it does not extend even to the cloſe of it.

The laſt apoſtolic journey of St. Paul ended in the year ſixty eight. In the courſe of little more than thirty years after the death of Chriſt, his doctrine was ſpread through a great part of the known world.

It was ſpread from the Euphrates to the Tiber, even in the moſt populous cities; and the fooliſhneſs of preaching overcame the wiſdom of famous orators and philoſophers, as the ſteady piety of it's votaries overcame alſo the formidable oppoſition of it's moſt zealous enemies.

And

And it appears then that we are ſtill left in full poſſeſſion of the evidence of this period.

A period of ſuch peculiar importance in the annals of Chriſtianity, that the judicious advocate of our faith will ever principally inſiſt on it. He will however inſiſt alſo, tho' in a leſs degree, on the ſucceeding ſingular growth of Chriſtianity amidſt the moſt terrifying oppoſition. He will not decline to give an anſwer to many even of the moſt favourite objections that are ſometimes urged as to the character and conduct of the firſt Chriſtians; nor refuſe to meet the enemy of his faith, although he has artfully made a diverſion into a country which he is leſs properly called on to defend.

With regard however to "the imperfec-"tions of the uninſpired teachers and be-"lievers of the Goſpel," [4] the matter may perhaps fairly be ſtated thus.

It is a debt that we owe certainly to their memories, that we owe to Chriſtianity in general, to keep them untainted as far as

[4] Ch. xv. p. 449.

may

may be by the breath of ſlander; and we need not fear on the whole to affirm that their lives did honour to their profeſſion. But if on the other hand, the ſentiments of individuals ſhould ſometimes be found uncharitable and unbecoming; if even their lives ſhould have been diſgraceful to their faith, we are in no ſort concerned to defend their cauſe as the cauſe of Chriſtianity itſelf. We may lament that ſo pure a religion ſhould ſo ſoon have contracted a mixture of corruption even during her firſt reſidence on earth, but we may find comfort in the reflexion that every material evidence by which it is ſupported ſtill remains in full force; and that the authentic records of her doctrines may ſtill teach us what fruits they ought to have brought forth in others, and ſhould yet produce in us.

Thus much premiſed, I ſhall now follow our Author regularly through the courſe of his Inquiry: and I ſhall attend not only to his quotations, but to ſuch ſhort ſignificant reflections alſo, not immediately relating to the

the ſubject of his hiſtory, as our Author has occaſionally introduced in the courſe of his general notes. From theſe perhaps the true temper and deſign of our Hiſtorian may beſt be collected, ſince in theſe we hear him ſpeaking in his own perſon. For all ſuch reflections too he is more immediately accountable, ſhould it be found that the Hiſtory itſelf can by no means be ſaid to have required them.

It is our Author's firſt object to inquire what were "the ſecondary cauſes of the ra-"pid growth of the Chriſtian Church." [5] The ſucceſs of Chriſtianity, he acknow-

[5] "Our curioſity is naturally prompted to in-"quire by what means the Chriſtian faith obtained ſo "remarkable a victory over the eſtabliſhed religions "of the earth. To this inquiry, an obvious but "ſatisfactory anſwer may be returned, that it was "owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine "itſelf, and to the ruling providence of it's great "author. But as truth and reaſon ſeldom find ſo "favourable a reception in the world, and as the "wiſdom of Providence frequently condeſcends to "uſe the paſſions of the human heart, and the gene-

"ral

ledges to have been principally owing " to " the convincing evidence of the doctrine " itſelf, and to the ruling providence of it's " great Author." Five ſeveral cauſes are accordingly aſſigned, the firſt of which is, " the inflexible, and if he may uſe the ex- " preſſion, the intolerant zeal of the Chriſ- " tians." [6]

But how an inflexible and intolerant zeal ſuch as condemned even thoſe practices of Paganiſm, which, in the opinion of our Author, " might perhaps have been tolerated " as mere civil inſtitutions," [7] could in-

" ral circumſtances of mankind, as inſtruments to " execute it's purpoſe; we may ſtill be permitted, " though with becoming ſubmiſſion, to aſk, not in- " deed what were the firſt, but what were the ſe- " condary cauſes of the rapid growth of the Chriſ- " tian Church." Ch. xv. p. 450.

[6] Ch. xv. p. 450.

[7] " Some idea may be conceived of the abhor- " rence of the Chriſtians for ſuch impious ceremo- " nies" (our Author means the ceremonies obſerved on the feſtivals of the Roman ritual) " by the ſcru- " pulous delicacy which they diſplayed on a much leſs

vite Pagans amidſt all their prejudices to embrace Chriſtianity, does not ſeem altogether eaſy to explain. It might indeed produce the only effect our Author in the recapitulation of his argument [8] has aſſigned to it; it might ſupply Chriſtians with that invincible valour which ſhould keep them firm to their received principles, but it could hardly be of ſervice in converting Pagans. Is not then this ſecondary cauſe inadequate to it's declared effect?

To the next cauſe alleged we may certainly attribute more force; and the friends

" leſs alarming occaſion. On days of general feſti-
" vity it was the cuſtom of the ancients to adorn
" their doors with lamps and with branches of lau-
" rel, and to crown their heads with a garland of
" flowers. This innocent and elegant practice might
" perhaps have been tolerated as a mere civil inſti-
" tution." Ch. xv. p. 465.

[8] " To the firſt of theſe cauſes the Chriſtians
" were indebted for their invincible valour which
" diſdained to capitulate with the enemy they were
" reſolved to vanquiſh." Ch. xv. p. 502.

of Chriſtianity will very readily acknowledge the "doctrine of a future life," [9] delivered, as it was, WITH THE DEMONSTRATION OF SPIRIT AND OF POWER, to have had it's ſhare in ſpreading the belief of it. But the ſucceſs perhaps was owing rather to this demonſtration of ſpirit and of power, than to the doctrine itſelf which was by no means ſuited either to the expectations or wiſhes of the Pagan world in general [1]. But even otherwiſe, with what propriety can this be conſidered as an human cauſe? Is not this diſtinguiſhed excellence of the Chriſtian revelation to be conſidered rather as a part of "the convin-"cing evidence of the doctrine itſelf," [2] and as belonging to the very eſſence of the

[9] "The doctrine of a future life improved by "every additional circumſtance which could give "weight and efficacy to that important truth." Ch. xv. p. 450.

[1] See Dr. Watſon's Second Letter to Mr. Gibbon.

[2] Ch. xv. p. 450. See the whole paſſage already quoted.

Goſpel?

Goſpel? If ſo, it is altogether improperly enumerated among "the ſecondary cauſes "which aſſiſted the truth of the Chriſtian "religion." [3]

"The miraculous powers aſcribed to the "primitive Church," [4] are aſſigned as a third cauſe. If by the term "aſcribed" be meant miracles juſtly aſcribed, as having been really performed, we readily agree with our Author. It ſeems plain however that he means that theſe powers were *aſcribed* only. [5] In either caſe we may remind him that he gains no ſtep towards accounting for the growth of Chriſtianity from *human* cauſes, while he ſets before us the ſuppoſed extraordinary interpoſition of the hand of God.

"The pure morals of the Chriſtians" [6] may readily be admitted alſo as another

[3] Ch. xv. p. 502.

[4] Ch. xv. p. 450.

[5] In our Author's recapitulation, (p. 502.) this cauſe is ſtiled "*the claim* of miracles."

[6] Ch. iv. "The pure and auſtere morals of the Chriſtians." Ch. xv. p. 450.

cauſe. But ſhall we not be obliged to refer theſe ultimately to "the convincing evi-"dence of the doctrine itſelf" as their proper ſource, rather than to "the paſſions of "the human heart" or to "the general cir-"cumſtances of mankind?" Nor need we object altogether to the "union and diſci-"pline of the Chriſtian republic" [7] conſidered as a fifth cauſe. We may remark however, that even were we to admit that a conſiderable degree of union ſubſiſted among the firſt Chriſtians (which cannot indeed altogether be admitted, [8]) a circumſtance which is more or leſs common to all civil bodies, becauſe it is eſſential to their nature, ought not ſeemingly to be conſidered as having been of any peculiar force in contributing to the ſtrength of the Chriſtian republic.

[7] "The union and diſcipline of the Chriſ-"tian republic, which gradually formed an inde-"pendent and increaſing ſtate in the heart of the "Roman Empire." Ch. xv. p. 450.

[8] See Dr. Watſon's fifth letter.

Thus

Thus much of our Author's general delineation of the cauſes of the growth of the Chriſtian Church. Let us now proceed to conſider ſuch diſquiſitions as offer themſelves in his particular diſplay of them.

In treating of the Jewiſh Nation, the teſtimony of a Greek Hiſtorian is oppoſed indirectly at leaſt to the expreſs teſtimony of the great Jewiſh Hiſtorian and Legiſlator himſelf. "Herodotus, who viſited Aſia "whilſt it obeyed the laſt of thoſe empires "(the Aſſyrian and Perſian) ſlightly men-"tions the Syrians of Paleſtine, who, ac-"cording to their own confeſſion, had re-"ceived from Egypt the rite of circumci-"ſion." [9]

I ſhall here firſt take notice of the miſrepreſentation which is in reality contained, however it may not have been intended, in the quoting Herodotus, as having *ſlightly* mentioned the Syrians of Paleſtine, by which title the Jews are ſuppoſed to be deſcribed.

[9] Note 1. on Ch. xv. p. 64.

Had

Had a full account been given of the paſſage, it would have appeared that Herodotus could not mention the Syrians of Paleſtine otherwiſe than *ſlightly*, becauſe he mentions them only incidentally. His direct object in view, is not in any ſort to ſpeak of theſe Syrians, but ſolely to prove that the Colchians were ſprung from the Egyptians. [1]

But even otherwiſe had Herodotus deſigned to treat expreſsly of the Jewiſh nation, we will venture in this caſe alſo to aſſign a reaſon why he would ſtill have taken but ſlight notice of them. Placing Herodotus even according to the lateſt computation of the time in which he flouriſhed, the Jews had but lately returned from their captivity in Babylon. In ſuch circumſtances it cannot be ſuppoſed either that he ſhould in any ſort have had ſufficient acquaintance with their hiſtory, to enable him to ſpeak largely of them, or that he ſhould

[1] See Herodotus, Lib. II. p. 150. Edit. Weſſeling. Amſt. 1763.

have

have conſidered them as in reality deſerving much notice.

We may juſtly allege alſo ſome reaſons why it may at leaſt be doubted, whether the Jews are certainly intended here under the title of the Syrians of Paleſtine. If Herodotus lived after the return of the Jews from captivity, ſtill however might not theſe Syrians in Paleſtine be the Samaritans, that mixed people, whoſe mortal enmity to the Jews was well known? If, as Sir Iſaac Newton places him, he was contemporary with Nehemiah, the Jews were then only rebuilding Jeruſalem, and the Samaritans inhabited Paleſtine. If according to the Chronology of ſome, he flouriſhed during the time of the Jewiſh captivity, the matter will be ſtill farther out of doubt. But if the Samaritans are meant, it may eaſily be conceived, that they would gladly rather aſcribe the origin of their cuſtoms to any nation, than to that which they deteſted above others.

To

To admit however that the Jews are alluded to by Herodotus (ſince Joſephus applies the paſſage to them, not indeed when he is treating of the origin of circumciſion, but as an argument of their high antiquity againſt Appion) the queſtion will reſt then on the comparative value of the teſtimony of the two hiſtorians, Moſes and Herodotus; the one aſſerting the Jews to have borrowed the rite of circumciſion from the Egyptians, the other aſcribing it's inſtitution to Abraham. In this view of the queſtion we may conſider properly the general credit of Herodotus, his particular qualifications in the preſent inſtance, and the internal evidence of the paſſage itſelf.

The credit of Herodotus ſtands openly impeached by other writers. Diodorus Siculus expreſsly accuſes him of fiction with regard to his account of Egyptian matters. [2] And

[2] Ὁσα μεν ουν Ηροδοτος ϗ τινες των τας Αιγυπτιων πραξεις συνταξαμενων εσχεδιακασιν, ΕΚΟΥΣΙΩΣ ΠΡΟΚΡΙΝΑΝΤΕΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ ΤΟ ΠΑΡΑΔΟΞΟΛΟΓΕΙΝ, ΚΑΙ ΜΥΘΟΥΣ ΠΛΑΤΤΕΙΝ ΤΗΣ ΨΥΧΑΓΩΓΙΑΣ ΕΝΕΚΑ, παρησομεν. L. I. c. 69.

Joſephus

Joſephus objects to the authority of the Greek Hiſtorians in general, and adds in the moſt pointed terms, that Herodotus ſtands convicted of fiction in the opinion of all. [3]. If his authority is in many inſtances doubtful, it will appear eſpecially liable to objection in the preſent inſtance.

He was certainly but ill qualified to treat of the hiſtory of the Jews, whom he does not even ſpeak of by their proper name; and with regard to the particular point in queſtion, we need only aſk which ſeems naturally to deſerve the moſt credit, Herodotus, who lived near a thouſand years after Moſes, or Moſes who lived ſo much nearer to the times of Abraham?

But may we not juſtly object farther alſo to Herodotus's teſtimony, as in itſelf im-

[3] —— τινὰ τρόπον Εφορῳ μεν Ελλάνικεν ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΠΛΕΙΣΤΟΙΣ ΨΕΥΔΟΜΕΝΟΝ ἐπιδεικνυσιν, Εφορον δὲ Τιμαιῳ, καὶ Τιμαιον, οἱ μετ' ἐκεινον γεγονοτες, ΗΡΟΔΟΤΟΝ ΔΕ ΠΑΝΤΕΣ.

Joſeph. contra App. Lib. I. 3.

probable and inconſiſtent? Who indeed can readily believe on the mere aſſertion of a Greek hiſtorian, that the Jews who adhered ſo ſcrupulouſly in general to the authority of their legiſlator Moſes, who gloried altogether in their father Abraham ſhould ever have adopted any other account of the origin of circumciſion than that which they had received from Moſes, ſhould ever have acknowledged themſelves Copyiſts, in the inſtance of that particular rite which ſerved principally to diſtinguiſh them as a people from other nations? The end for which circumciſion is related to have been inſtituted neceſſarily ſuppoſes it to have been firſt practiſed by the Jews only. It could not otherwiſe ſerve as a mark to diſtinguiſh them by. And that this was the end of the inſtitution let Tacitus himſelf be called on to prove. [4]

[4] Circumcidere genitalia inſtituêre, ut diverſitate noſcantur. L. V. Ch. v.

It

It is ſomewhat remarkable, that while Tacitus's deſcription of the Jews "as hav-"ing languiſhed for many ages the moſt "deſpiſed portion of their ſlaves under the "Aſſyrian and Perſian monarchies," [5] has been ſo readily adopted by our Author, he ſhould have omitted another paſſage of the ſame Hiſtorian, affording a ſtrong objection to the probability of Herodotus's account. Our Author has indeed himſelf elſewhere called it "the *diſtinguiſhing* rite "of circumciſion." [6]

But from the diſcuſſion of this point let us proceed to attend to our Author's general delineation of the character of the Jewiſh nation. It exhibits ſo diſguſtful a portrait of their manners that it may well be required to be ſupported by the ſtrongeſt evidence. "The ſullen obſtinacy with "which they maintained their peculiar rites "and unſocial manners, ſeemed to mark

[5] Ch. xv. p. 541.
[6] Ch. xv. p. 453.

" them out a diſtinct ſpecies of men who " boldly profeſſed, or who faintly diſguiſed, " their implacable hatred to the reſt of hu- " man kind." [7] The ſucceeding ſentence far from confirming this accuſation, ſerves only to mark their judicious adherence to their own " *peculiar rites*," in preference to the abſurdities of " *the elegant* mythology " of the Greeks;" and exhibits no proof whatſoever of " *their implacable hatred*" to mankind. " Neither the violence of An- " tiochus, nor the arts of Herod, nor the " example of the circumjacent nations," ſays our Author, " could ever perſuade the " Jews to aſſociate with the inſtitutions of " Moſes, the elegant mythology of the " Greeks." [8]

The firſt teſtimony produced in ſupport of this ſevere accuſation is that of the Roman Satiriſt, whoſe ignorance of the real manners of the Jews, and whoſe bigotted contempt of them, are equally conſpicuous.

[7] Ch. xv. (p. 451.
[8] Ch. xv. p. 451.

On

On the authority of his reference to the "hidden volume" of Moſes [9] we are called on to believe, that the Jews refuſed even the common offices of humanity to all except thoſe of their own communion. "The "letter of this law," our Author ingenuouſly acknowledges, "is not to be found "in the preſent volume of Moſes." It ſhould now ſeem perhaps that it was by no means worthy of our Hiſtorian to ſelect this paſſage from a prejudiced author, evidently unacquainted with the volume of Moſes, and whoſe reference to it was found not to be juſt.

But ſince our Author acknowledges that "the *letter* of this law is not to be found "in the volume of Moſes," it ſeems reaſonable to expect then that he ſhould ſhew us it is contained in the *ſpirit* of the volume. This is not even pretended. From the vo-

[9] Tradidit arcano quæcunque volumine Moſes
Non monſtrare vias eadem niſi ſacra colenti,
Quæſitum ad fontem ſolos deducere verpos.
Juv. Sat. xiv. L. 102.

lume

lume of Moſes we paſs on, by a tranſition ſomewhat violent and unſatisfactory, to the writings of Maimonides, a Jewiſh Rabbi who lived as late as in the *twelfth* Century. Nor is this quotation made from Maimonides himſelf, but through the medium of another writer. "The wiſe, the humane "Maimonides *openly teaches*, that if an ido- "later fall into the water, a Jew ought not "to ſave him from inſtant death." The words of Baſnage concerning Maimonides are ſomewhat leſs ſtrong: "The ſaying is "*imputed* to Maimonides." [1]. And from the writer whom he himſelf refers to it ſeems to appear that Maimonides had only *repeated* the ſaying from the gloſs of ſome commentator on the Talmud. [2] Be this

[1] On impute a Maimonides d'avoir dit, &c. Baſnage Hiſt. des Juifs. L. VI. ch. i. ſ. xiii.

[2] Item jubent in *Aboda-zara*, capitulo *non conſtituant*, et *recitatur* per Rabbi Moſen de Ægypto in libro Madda, quod, &c.

Hieron. a ſanctâ Fide contra Judæos, Lib. ii. c. 6. [de rebus quæ ſunt in Talmud) in Bibl, Patrum. T. xxvi. Edit. Lugd.

as

as it may, in the queſtion before us we are evidently concerned only about the Jewiſh written Law, not about traditions, and commentaries upon them.

Since the particular accuſation exhibited againſt the volume of Moſes does not ſtand confirmed by an appeal to it, it will be proper to inquire in the next place whether the Law be not even found expreſsly to contradict it. "The volume of Moſes" affords thoſe original materials which ought principally to have been conſulted; from which both the real character of the nation and of their Law ought to have been deduced. If it's hiſtory ſhews that the general cuſtoms of the nation by no means marked their "implacable hatred to the reſt of human "kind," if the precepts of it's Law enjoin expreſsly a general humanity, and give no countenance to "unſocial manners," neither the different practice of individuals, nor any oppoſite precepts of thoſe who may have taught FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN, can afford juſt ground for ſuch

ſuch a delineation of the manners of the nation or of the precepts of their Law, as our Author has ſet before us. To appeal then to the Law itſelf. It's words are theſe; THOU SHALT NEITHER VEX A STRANGER NOR OPPRESS HIM. [3] — THE STRANGER THAT DWELLETH WITH YOU SHALL BE UNTO YOU AS ONE BORN AMONGST YOU, AND THOU SHALT LOVE HIM AS THYSELF. [4] Theſe and other ſimilar precepts may be found repeatedly inculcated in the Law of Moſes, and the practice of them is ſtill farther enforced in a very remarkable manner, by urging continually this motive, that they were themſelves STRANGERS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT. [5]. The Lord their God is expreſsly deſcribed as loving the Stranger IN GIVING HIM FOOD AND RAIMENT; and his people are exhorted THEREFORE TO LOVE THE STRANGER doubtleſs in like manner. [6]

[3] Exod. xxii. 21.
[4] Levit. xix. 33.
[5] Levit. xix. 34. Deut. x. 19, &c.
[6] Deut. x. 18 and 19. Exod. xxiii. 9.

Such

Such are the expreſs precepts of the Moſaic Law. They are not certainly calculated to teach an "implacable hatred to the reſt "of human kind." And it is farther remarkable, that when Joſephus treats of the duties of humanity towards ſtrangers as enjoined by Moſes (although in alluſion ſeemingly to the ſpirit, rather than to the letter of the Law) he ſpecifies thoſe very acts of friendſhip as due towards *all* ſtrangers, which the Roman Satiriſt aſſerts the Moſaic Law to have forbidden. He repreſents it as the will of their Legiſlator that they ſhould give fire, *water*, and food to all that ſhould be in want—ſhould *ſhew the traveller his road*, and leave no one unburied. [7]

But to paſs now to our Author's deſcription of the Chriſtian Church. Among the firſt objects of his reſearches the ſects of the

[7] Ταῦτα δὲ προειρηκεν ὧν ἐστιν ἡ μετάδοσις ἀναγκαία. ΠΑΣΙ παρεχειν τοις δεομενοις πυρ, ΥΔΩΡ, τροφην, ΟΔΟΥΣ ΦΡΑΖΕΙΝ, ἀταφον μη περιοραν.

Joſeph. contr. App. L. 2. ſ. 29.

Ebionites and Gnoſtics hold a diſtinguiſhed place.

It will not occaſion much ſurprize to any one who conſiders the authoritative and expreſs deciſion of the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles --- who conſiders the general tenor and ſpirit of the goſpel—that, in proceſs of time at leaſt, thoſe who like the Ebionites contended for the retaining the ceremonies of the Moſaic Law as a part of the ſyſtem of Chriſtianity, ſhould be openly condemned by every Chriſtian.

If an intemperate degree of zeal unhappily tranſported *ſome* into a culpable extreme, and led them not only to "exclude "their judaizing brethren from the hope of "ſalvation," but to decline alſo "any in-"tercourſe with them in the common offi-"ces of ſocial life," [8] we muſt lament certainly the error of thoſe who knew not WHAT SPIRIT THEY WERE OF.

[8] See the whole paſſage quoted below, p. 28.

But

But on the other hand to have treated thoſe who, while they profeſſed themſelves Chriſtians in principle, were Jews in practice, as real and perfect Chriſtians, would have been to forego the plain and deciſive precepts of the goſpel, which, when that which was perfect was now come, enjoined the abolition of that which was imperfect.

The "*very many*" among the "*orthodox*" Chriſtians who tranſgreſſed the true bounds of Chriſtian Charity exiſt only in our Author's delineation of them, not in the paſſage itſelf which he appeals to. As little does it appear, on conſulting the dialogue referred to, either that Juſtin "was *preſſed* "to declare the *ſentiments of the Church*," or that "he expreſſed himſelf *with the moſt* "*guarded diffidence*." We will compare our Author's words at full length, with thoſe of the learned Father.

"In a few years after the return of the "Church of Jeruſalem, it became a matter "of doubt and controverſy, whether a man "who ſincerely acknowledged Jeſus as the

" Meſſiah, but who ſtill continued to ob-
" ſerve the law of Moſes, could poſſibly
" hope for ſalvation. The humane temper
" of Juſtin Martyr, inclined him to anſwer
" this queſtion in the affirmative; and
" though he *expreſſed himſelf with the moſt*
" *guarded diffidence*, he ventured to deter-
" mine in favour of ſuch an imperfect
" Chriſtian, if he were content to practiſe
" the Moſaic ceremonies, without pretend-
" ing to aſſert their general uſe or neceſſity.
" But when Juſtin was *preſſed to declare the*
" *ſentiment of the Church*, he confeſſed that
" there were *very many* among the *orthodox*
" Chriſtians, who not only excluded their
" Judaizing brethren from the hope of ſal-
" vation, but who declined any intercourſe
" with them in the common offices of friend-
" ſhip, hoſpitality, and ſocial life." [9].

Let us now attend to Juſtin's own words in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, on which this repreſentation is meant to be founded.

[9] Ch. xv. p. 458, 459.

When

When Juſtin had anſwered the queſtion propoſed to him, he repreſents Trypho as replying thus; " Why did you ſay, *accord-*
" *ing to my opinion*, ſuch an one ſhall be
" ſaved, unleſs there are *ſome* who ſay that
" ſuch ſhall not be ſaved?" To which Juſtin anſwers; " There are, O Trypho;
" and thoſe men who do not even dare to
" aſſociate or join in hoſpitality with ſuch;
" whom I cannot agree with. But if they
" thro' the weakneſs of their opinion are
" willing to obſerve as many of the ordi-
" nances of Moſes as they now can, (which
" we think to have been ordained on ac-
" count of the hardneſs of the people's
" hearts) beſides the hoping in Chriſt, and
" the obſerving the laſting and natural dic-
" tates of juſtice and piety, and chooſe to
" live with Chriſtians and the faithful, as
" I have already ſaid, without perſuading
" them either to be circumciſed like them-
" ſelves, or to keep their Sabbaths, or ob-
" ſerve other ordinances of the like ſort, I
" think that they ought both to be receiv-
" ed,

" ed, and partake of all things, as kinſmen " and brethren." [1] The honeſt openeſs of the pious Father's declaration in this latter part of the ſentence cannot ſurely be reconciled with the idea of a *guarded diffidence*; any more than it can be diſcovered from the reſt of the quotation that Trypho *preſſed him to declare the ſentiment of the Church*, or that " there were *very many* among the *or-* " *thodox* Chriſtians who excluded their Ju-

[1] Κακεινος, διὰ τι ȣν ειπας, ως μεν εμοι δοκει, σωθησεται ὁ τοιȣτος, ει μη τι ΕΙΣΙΝ ΟΙ ΛΕΓΟΝΤΕΣ οτι ȣ σωθησονται οἱ τοιȣτοι· Εισιν, απεκριναμην, ω Τρυφων και μηδε κοινωνειν ομιλιας ἡ ἑστιας τοις τοιȣτοις τολμωντες, οἱς εγω ȣ συναινος ειμι, αλλ' εαν αυτοι, δια το ασθενες της γνωμης, και τα ὁσα δυνανται νυν εκ των Μωσεως, ἁ διὰ το σκληρο καρδιον τȣ λαȣ νοȣμεν διατεταχθαι, μετα τȣ επι τȣτον τον Χριστον ἐλπιζειν και τας αιωνιȣς και φυσει δικαιοπραξίας και ευσεβειας φυλασσειν βȣλωνται, και αιρωνται συζην τοις χριστιανοις και πιστοις ως προειπον, μη πειθοντες αυτȣς περι τεμνεσθαι ομοιως αυτοις, μητε σαββατιζειν, μητε αλλα ὁσα τοιαυτα εστι τηρειν, και ΠΡΟΣΛΑΜΒΑΝΕΣΘΑΙ, ΚΑΙ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΕΙΝ ΑΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΩΣ ΟΜΟΣΠΛΑΓΧΝΟΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΔΕΛΦΟΙΣ, ΔΕΙΝ ΑΠΟΦΑΙΝΟΜΑΙ·

J. Mart. Dial. p. 231. edit. Thirlb. Lond. 1722.

" daizing

" daizing brethren from the hope of ſalva-
" tion."

The hiſtory of the Gnoſtics, were it fully diſplayed, would afford room for ſeveral important obſervations. It might be ſhewn that their knowledge was not indeed according to truth, was rather in many inſtances in direct oppoſition to it, and that their objections ſeem to have flowed principally from that fruitful ſource of error, even in later times, a vain affectation OF SCIENCE FALSELY SO CALLED. Let us for the preſent content ourſelves with collecting ſuch ſcattered features of their true portraiture, as even our Author himſelf who muſt be allowed certainly to have done full juſtice to their objections may ſupply us with.

I cannot however but mention the profane deriſion of the Gnoſtics, as it is ſtated by our Author, in one inſtance. There is ſomething ſo extremely daring and horrible in giving the ſoft epithet of " venial" to an offence committed in defiance of the expreſs command of God delivered by himſelf; — there

there is ſuch a flagrant want of truth, in aſſerting " *eternal* condemnation to have " been pronounced againſt *human kind*" [2]

[2] " The Moſaic account of the creation and fall " of Man was treated with profane deriſion by the " Gnoſtics who would not liſten with patience to " the repoſe of the Deity after ſix days labour, &c. " and the *eternal* condemnation pronounced againſt " *human kind* for the *venial* offence of their firſt pro- " genitors." Ch. xv. p. 460.—It may perhaps ſeem to deſerve notice that the Note on this paſſage (N. 27. p. lxvii.) does not refer us to theſe objections of the Gnoſtics, but ſerves only to *inform* us that " Dr. Burnet (Archæologia l. ii. c. 7.) has diſcuſſed " the firſt chapters of Geneſis with too much wit and " freedom." Dr. Burnet, however, amidſt all his wit and freedom has not dared to aſſert what our Author has put in the mouth of the Gnoſtics, but on the contrary interprets God's ſentence as wholly *temporal*. " Tu vero curioſa et delicatula, in dolore " liberos paries : mariti jugum feres, nec diſcedes " unquam ab ipſius latere, niſi impetratâ veniâ. " Denique, quod ad te ſpectat, Adame, quoniam " auſcultaviſti uxori tuæ magis quam mihi, in ſudore " vultûs ei et liberis parabis victum. Non ut antea, " ſponte natos fructus, ſed cum labore et moleſtiâ " proventum terræ colliges. Sterileſcat deinceps " Terra,

for this offence of their firſt progenitors, when every circumſtance of God's ſentence relates to *this life* only; when no mention whatſoever is made of *human kind* in general [3], that we may well wonder to find ſuch objections repeated.

" terra propter te maledicta: Tribulos, ſpinas, lolium, " herbas noxias proferat. Et ubi vitam exegeris " incommodam et oneroſam, Pulvis es, et in pulve- " rem reverteris." (p. 282. edit. 1692.)—And elſewhere, ſtill more expreſsly, in treating of God's original declaration, (" THOU SHALT SURELY DIE.") " Sed quod de *poſteris* ipſius adjiciis, eorumq; *pœnâ* " id non exprimitur in Lege."—Nullæ autem leges ſunt *torquendæ*, minime pœnariæ. (p. 291.)

[3] UNTO THE WOMAN HE SAID, I WILL GREATLY MULTIPLY THY SORROW AND CONCEPTION, IN SORROW THOU SHALT BRING FORTH CHILDREN: AND THY DESIRE SHALL BE TO THY HUSBAND, AND HE SHALL RULE OVER THEE. AND UNTO ADAM HE SAID, BECAUSE THOU HAST HEARKENED UNTO THE VOICE OF THY WIFE, AND HAST EATEN OF THE TREE, WHICH I COMMANDED THEE, SAYING, THOU SHALT NOT EAT OF IT, CURSED IS THE GROUND FOR THY SAKE; IN SORROW SHALT THOU EAT OF IT ALL THE DAYS OF THY

For the reſt, let us avail ourſelves of his own acknowledgments, that the objections of the Gnoſtics were " petulantly urged " through vain ſcience, that they delivered " themſelves to the guidance of a diſorder- " ed imagination; that they degraded the " honour of religion, and impiouſly repre- " ſented the God of Iſrael"[4] under a character which cannot indeed belong to him.

LIFE. THORNS ALSO AND THISTLES SHALL IT BRING FORTH TO THEE; AND THOU SHALT EAT THE HERB OF THE FIELD. IN THE SWEAT OF THY FACE SHALT THOU EAT BREAD TILL THOU RETURN UNTO THE GROUND; FOR OUT OF IT WAST THOU TAKEN: FOR DUST THOU ART, AND TO DUST THOU SHALT RETURN. Geneſis Chap. iii. Ver. 16—22.

[4] " Tho' they conſtantly diſturbed the peace, " and frequently degraded the honour of religion, " they contributed to aſſiſt rather than to retard the " progreſs of Chriſtianity. The Gentile converts, " whoſe ſtrongeſt objections and prejudices were di- " rected againſt the Law of Moſes, could find admiſ- " ſion into many Chriſtian ſocieties, which required " not from their untutored minds, any belief of an " antecedent revelation. Ch. xv. p. 462.

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If notwithſtanding all this, the Gnoſtics "contributed to aſſiſt, rather than retard "the progreſs of Chriſtianity," they ſeem at leaſt to have formed their converts very imperfectly, while "they required not any "belief of that antecedent revelation," [5] which duly underſtood forms an indiſpenſable part of the genuine ſyſtem of Chriſtianity. In ſpeaking of the different ſects into which the Gnoſtics were divided, our Author remarks that inſtead of the four Goſpels adopted by the Church, "the heretics "produced a multitude of hiſtories, in "which the actions and diſcourſes of Chriſt "and his Apoſtles were adapted to their "reſpective tenets." [6] "See," ſays he, "a very remarkable paſſage of Origen. "That indefatigable writer, who had con-"ſumed his life in the ſtudy of the ſcrip-"tures, relies for their authenticity on the "*inſpired* authority of the Church." [7]

[5] See the laſt quoted paſſage.
[6] Ch. xv. p. 452.
[7] Note 34. p. lxvii.

If the paſſage alluded to be remarkable for acknowledging a well known fact, namely, that there were ſpurious Goſpels, the deſcription of it is juſt. —— But it is at leaſt remarkable alſo for eſtabliſhing expreſsly the authenticity of four Goſpels only, tho' not, as it is erroneouſly ſaid, " on " the *inſpired* authority of the Church." — Let the paſſage ſpeak for itſelf. — " In the " New Teſtament many have endeavoured " to write Goſpels, but all have not been " received. And that ye may know that " not only four Goſpels, but many were " written, out of which theſe which we " have were choſen, and delivered to the " Churches, we may appeal to the very ex- " ordium of St. Luke, which runs thus ; " Many have endeavoured to ſet forth in order a declaration," &c. This which he " ſays, *have endeavoured*, contains a hidden " accuſation againſt thoſe who have ſtarted " forth to write Goſpels without the grace " of the holy Spirit. For Matthew, and " Mark, and John and Luke, did not *en-*

" *deavour*

" *deavour to write*, but being filled with
" the holy Spirit *wrote* Goſpels. Many
" therefore have endeavoured to ſet forth
" in order a narration of thoſe things which
" are moſt manifeſtly known amongſt us.
" The Church has four Goſpels, many he-
" reſies: among which, one (Goſpel) is
" written according to the Egyptians, ano-
" ther according to the twelve Apoſtles.
" Baſilides dared alſo to write a Goſpel, and
" to entitle it by his own name. Many
" have endeavoured to write, many alſo
" have endeavoured to ſet forth [a narra-
" tion] in order. Only four Goſpels have
" been approved, out of which doctrines
" are to be taken in the perſon of our Lord
" and Saviour. I know one Goſpel, which
" is called according to Thomas, and ac-
" cording to Matthias; *we have read* many
" others, leſt we might ſeem to be ignorant
" of any thing, for the ſake of thoſe, who
" think they know ſomething, if they know
" theſe. — But amidſt all theſe we approve
" of nothing elſe, but what the Church ap-

" proves

" proves of; that is, that four Goſpels only " are to be received." [8]

[8] In Novo teſtamento multi conati ſunt ſcribere Evangelia, ſed non omnes recepti. Et ut ſciatis non ſolum quatuor Evangelia; ſed plurima eſſe conſcripta, ex quibus hæc quæ habemus electa ſunt, et tradita Eccleſiis, ex ipſo proæmio Lucæ quod ita contexitur cognoſcamus, *Quoniam quidem multi conati ſunt ordinare narrationem.* Hoc quod ait: Conati ſunt, latenter habet accuſationem eorum qui abſque gratiâ ſpiritus ſancti ad ſcribenda Evangelia profilierunt. Matthæus quippe, et Marcus, et Joannes, et Lucas non ſunt conati ſcribere, ſed ſpiritu ſancto pleni ſcripſerunt Evangelia. Multi igitur conati ſunt ordinare narrationem de his rebus quæ manifeſtiſſime cognita ſunt in nobis. Eccleſia quatuor habet Evangelia, hæreſes plurimas: e quibus quoddam ſcribitur ſecundum Ægyptios aliud juxta duodecim Apoſtolos. Auſus fuit et Baſilides ſcribere Evangelium, et ſuo illud nomine titulare. Multi conati ſunt ſcribere, ſed et multi conati ſunt ordinare: Quatuor tantum Evangelia ſunt probata, e quibus ſub perſona Domini et ſalvatoris noſtri proferenda ſunt dogmata. Scio quoddam Evangelium, quod appellatur ſecundum Thomam, et juxta Matthiam; alia plura legimus nequid ignorare videremur, propter eos qui ſe putant aliquid ſcire, ſi iſta cognoverint. Sed in his omnibus nihil

On an accurate conſideration of this paſſage, we may venture to deny that Origen "relied on the authority of the Church" (much leſs on it's *inſpired* authority, an invidious Epithet which the original text does not even give the leaſt poſſible countenance to) for the authenticity of the Goſpels. His words, we have ſeen, are theſe; "But "amidſt all theſe (amidſt all theſe various "Goſpels) we approve of nothing elſe, but "what the Church approves of, that is, "that four Goſpels only are to be received." He thinks *with* the Church, he approves of that which ſhe approves of, but it is by no means ſaid, that he approves of it *only because* ſhe does; which muſt be underſtood ſurely to be implied in the Phraſe "relying "on her authority." On the contrary he ſeems rather plainly to have relied on his *own* judgment only; and not to have judg-

nihil aliud probamus, niſi quod Eccleſia, id eſt quatuor tantum Evangelia recipienda. [In Proœmium Lucæ, Homilia prima. — Origenis Opera edita a Genebrardo. Pariſiis 1619.] — Theſe Homilies on St. Luke are extant only in *Latin*.

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ed without compariſon made, ſince expreſs mention is made of " his having read many " other Goſpels." The grounds on which he formed his judgment ſeem farther delineated to us in a ſubſequent part of the ſame Homily: " But let the faithful, ſays " he, more prudent and ſtrong, follow *rea-* " *ſon* and the word, and ſo judge what is " true or *falſe*." Then follow St. Luke's words, " Even as they have delivered unto " us, who from the beginning were eye- " witneſſes, and miniſters of the word." [9] He truſts to St. Luke and the other Evangeliſts; he receives their report as *true*, on the principles of *reaſon*, becauſe it is the report of thoſe who were themſelves " eye witneſſes and miniſters of the word, or who received it from ſuch, but he rejects

[9] " Fidelis vero magis prudens atque robuſtus " rationem ſequatur et verbum, et ſic dijudicet quid " verum quidve falſum ſit. Sicut tradiderunt nobis " qui ab initio ipſi viderunt, et miniſtri fuêrunt ſer- " monis."

In Proæm. Lucæ, Hom. 1ma.

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the hiſtories of others as comparatively ſpurious, becauſe they were both farther removed from the beſt means of information, and had "*adapted*" (as our Author himſelf allows) "the actions and diſcourſes of Chriſt "and of his Apoſtles, to their reſpective "tenets." [1] Rejecting now the groundleſs inſinuation of our Author againſt Origen, let us adopt his juſt deſcription of his general character, and conclude that it affords no mean argument in favour of the authenticity of our received Goſpels, ſince "that "indefatigable writer who had conſumed "his life in the ſtudy of the Scripture," who had *read* many other Goſpels, became convinced in conſequence of his laborious reſearches, that the four Goſpels only which the Church had received, ought to be received.—Let the Impugners of the authenticity of theſe four Goſpels avail themſelves of Origen's teſtimony, by any fair method, —if they can.

Let us now conſider another oblique in-

[1] See quotation, p. 35.

ſinuation againſt the validity of the teſtimony of the Evangeliſts, which is founded on a paſſage in an Epiſtle of Ignatius. — Our Author proceeds —— " It was " impoſſible that the Gnoſtics could re- " ceive our preſent Goſpels, many parts of " which (particularly in the reſurrection of " Chriſt) are directly, and as it might ſeem " deſignedly, pointed againſt their favourite " tenets. It is therefore ſomewhat ſingular " that Ignatius (Epiſt. ad Smyrn. Patr. " Apoſtol. tom. ii. p. 34.) ſhould chuſe to " employ a vague and doubtful tradition, " inſtead of quoting the certain teſtimony " of the Evangeliſts." [2]

The accurate and judicious Dr. Lardner having fully diſcuſſed the paſſage here alluded to, [3], I cannot do better than avail myſelf of his labours, after having tried even *him*, (that we may not truſt to *any* ſecond-hand report) by conſulting the original Authors themſelves. The paſſage ſtands thus.

[2] Note 34. p. lxvii.

[3] Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory, Part ii. Vol. I. (Article St. Ignatius) p. 181.

" He (Chriſt) truly ſuffered, as alſo truly " raiſed up himſelf, not as ſome unbeliev- " ers ſay, that he only ſeemed to ſuffer, they " themſelves only ſeeming to be. And as " they think, ſo it ſhall happen to them, to " be incorporeal and phantaſtical [4], (lite- " rally, *incorporeal and demoniac*). But I " know that after the reſurrection he was in " the fleſh, and I believe him to be ſo ſtill. " And when he came to thoſe who were " with Peter, he ſaid to them; *Take, handle* " *me, and ſee that I am not an incorporeal* " *phantom.*" [5] Theſe words of our Saviour

[4] Dr. Lardner remarks on the whole of this paſſage, that it ſeems to appear that Ignatius was wont to uſe the words *demon* and *demoniac* as equivalent to *phantom* and *phantaſtical*. Ibid. p. 184.

[5] Και αληθως επαθεν, ως και αληθως ανεστησεν εαυτον· ουχ ωσπερ απιστοι τινες λεγουσιν το δοκειν αυτον πεπονθεναι αυτοι το δοκειν οντες. και καθως φρονησιν, και συμβησεται αυτοις ουσιν ασωμασοις και δαιμονικοις.

Εγω γαρ και μετα την αναστασιν εν σαρκι αυτον οιδα και πιστευω οντα. και ὁτε ηλθεν προς Πετρον και τους περι Πετρον ηλθεν, εφη αυτοις; λαβετε, ψηλαφησατε με και ιδετε ὁτι ουκ ειμι δαιμονιον ασωματον.

Epiſt. ad Smyrn. Patr. Apoſtol. tom. ii. p. 34.

not correſponding exactly with thoſe attributed to him in St. Luke's Goſpel, it has been doubted whence they are taken. Euſebius declares that he is ignorant whence Ignatius took them. [6] St. Jerome pronounces that they are taken out of the Goſpel according to the Hebrews, one of thoſe ranked by the Church among the ſpurious Goſpels. [7] It is in theſe words plainly that we muſt look for " the vague and " doubtful tradition employed" by Ignatius, according to our Author, " inſtead of " the certain teſtimony of the Evangeliſts." Caſaubon indeed has expreſsly conjectured that the words contain ſome unwritten tradition, which was afterwards written down, and inſerted into the Goſpel of the Hebrews. [8] Notwithſtanding the teſtimony of St. Jerome, it is the opinion of Le Clerc,

[6] H. E. L. 3. c. 36.

[7] In libro De Script. Eccleſ. (de Ignatio) et in lib. 1. comment. in Eſaiam.

[8] Exerc, ad Baron. xvi. cap. 126.

Biſhop

Biſhop Pearſon, and Dr. Lardner, [9] that Ignatius has only quoted the paſſage of St. Luke, [1] where words exactly of the ſame import occur; and has not taken it out of the Goſpel according to the Hebrews. This conjecture receives ſtrength from a conſideration of the particular circumſtances which Ignatius was in when he wrote this Epiſtle to the Church of Smyrna. He was on his journey to the ſcene of his martyrdom under cuſtody of a ſtrong guard; and as he might not therefore very probably have St. Luke's Goſpel with him, he might quote the paſſage barely from memory. It is probable that from the very nature of the firſt writings, which were contained in long rolls, and the conſequent inconvenience of opening them on every occaſion, the Fathers have often quoted the Scriptures by me-

[9] Dr. Lardner's Credibility, as above, p. 182.

[1] BEHOLD MY HANDS AND MY FEET, THAT IT IS I MYSELF. HANDLE ME AND SEE, FOR A SPIRIT HAS NOT FLESH AND BONES, AS YE SEE ME HAVE. Ch. xxiv. v. 39.

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mory, even when in happier circumſtances than Ignatius was at the time of his quoting the paſſage in queſtion.

But be this as it may, whether the paſſage can indeed juſtly be conſidered as an appeal to St. Luke, or not, the whole matter at leaſt is of ſo doubtful a nature that no certain argument can be founded on it. And were it even otherwiſe, could it be ſhewn either to be an appeal to mere tradition, or to an apocryphal Goſpel, what yet could be fairly inferred to the diſcredit of "the certain teſtimony of the Evangeliſts" from a *ſingle* inſtance of the kind, when the ſame writer has elſewhere abundantly recommended and appealed to "their teſtimo-"ny?" [2] If Le Clerc's obſervation may be truſted, there is not only *no other* paſſage in Ignatius, but even none in the *Apoſtolical* Fathers in general concerning the doc-

[2] See a number of paſſages quoted (as above) by Dr. Lardner from the genuine Epiſtles of Ignatius, from p. 154. to p. 181. Conſult particularly p. 178. to 181.

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trine or hiſtory of Chriſt, that may even ſeem to be quoted from any Apocryphal book [3].

In reality alſo, conſidering the early date of Ignatius's writings, the Goſpel of the Hebrews might not then have been condemned as ſpurious, altho' after due enquiry it was rejected afterwards. The learned Caſaubon remarks juſtly that the Church took time to make her determinations in theſe matters. His words relating to Baronius may with a ſlight alteration be applied to the caſe in queſtion. "He there-" fore that on account of this quotation in " Ignatius ſhall imagine that he choſe *to* " *employ a vague and doubtful tradition inſtead*

[3] Non animadverti ulla uſpiam Evangelia aut ſcripta apocrypha ad hiſtoriam aut doctrinam Chriſti pertinentia ab iis laudari, excepto uno illo Ignatii, in quo videri poſſit laudare Evangelium *Nazaræorum*; ſed quem ex *Luca* expreſſum potius exiſtimaverim, ut jam dixi.

Le Clerc Diſc. iii. de quatuor Evang. ad calcem Harmoniæ Evang. S. vii. p. 542. edit. Amſt. 1629.

of

" *of quoting the certain teſtimony of the Evan-*
" *geliſts*, will have fallen into a groſs and
" dangerous error." [4] Had this paſſage therefore been fully conſidered by our Author, it could not have appeared in any light to have juſtified the inſinuation it has given riſe to: and without a full conſideration of the paſſage, it was not right certainly to hazard the inſinuation at all.

Our Author has taken much pains in deſcribing the extreme abhorrence of idolatry that prevailed among the firſt Chriſtians. This ought not ſurely to give offence to thoſe who are themſelves turned from VANITIES TO THE LIVING GOD.

[4] —— veriſſimum nempe eſt quod ante diſcebamus, *tempore* opus fuiſſe ut Eccleſiæ auctoritate rejicerentur multi libri qui primis ſeculis auctoritatis ſaltem antipitis fuerunt. Qui igitur propter hanc laudationem Ignatii [Hebraicum Ebionitorum Evangelium Græco textui voluerit præferre,] gravem et periculoſum errorem erraverit. Exerc. in Baron. xvi. c. xxvi.

What

What wonder indeed if thoſe who were peculiarly called upon not to ſerve vain idols, fled even from " the moſt ſacred feſtivals of " the Roman ritual, if they abhorred even " the humane licence of the Saturnalia, and " refuſed to hail the genial powers of fe- " cundity ;" [5] when theſe feſtivals were deſtined to indulge the remembrance of the dead with idolatrous ceremonies, when to partake of them neceſſarily implied a belief of the ſyſtem of Polytheiſm !

What wonder, if devoted as they were to worſhip the Deity IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH, they remained unmoved by the ſplendor and pomp of external ceremonies, if even " the elegant forms, and agreeable " fictions of the Greeks," and the beautiful mythology of the poets, made no impreſ- ſion on thoſe who were not engaged in the ſearch of what was alluring to the eye, or pleaſing to the imagination, but dedicated only to the ſolemn ſtudy of pure religion!

[5] Ch. xv. p. 465.

Our Author has indeed himſelf acknowledged elſewhere the abſurdity of this "beau-
"tiful mythology." [6] It is probable that in later days at leaſt, not more than *one* writer can be found who has dared to appear an open advocate for the reaſonableneſs and even probability of the Syſtem of the antient Heathen Mythology. His words may ſerve perhaps as a very ſingular inſtance of the extravagant refinements of modern ſcepticiſm. "If we examine without pre-
"judice the antient heathen mythology as
"contained in the poets, we ſhall not diſ-
"cover in it any ſuch monſtrous abſurdity
"as we may be apt at firſt to imagine.
"Where is the difficulty of conceiving that

[6] In his Eſſai ſur l'etude de la literature. Lond. 1761. "Ce ſyſteme riant, mais *abſurde*." (p. 109.)
This work is preceded by an Engliſh dedication which does the utmoſt honour to the Author. — A dedication from A SON diſtinguiſhing himſelf in literature at an early period of life, addreſſed in the warmeſt terms of affection to A RESPECTED FATHER!

the

" the ſame powers and principles whatever
" they were which formed this viſible world,
" men and animals, produced alſo a ſpecies
" of intelligent creatures of more refined
" ſubſtance and greater authority than the
" reſt? That theſe creatures may be capri-
" cious, revengeful, paſſionate, voluptu-
" ous, is eaſily conceived; nor is any cir-
" cumſtance more apt amongſt ourſelves to
" engender ſuch vices than the licenſe of
" abſolute authority. And in ſhort the
" whole mythological ſyſtem is ſo *natural*,
" that in the vaſt variety of planets and
" worlds contained in this univerſe, it ſeems
" *more than probable*, that ſome where or
" other it is really carried into execu-
" tion." [7]. The glaring abſurdities of the Heathen Mythology, the palpable inconſiſtency of a Syſtem which repreſented Beings ſuperior to Man and to be worſhipped by him as tainted with the vices of men,

[7] Hume's Natural Hiſtory of Religion (Sect. xi. with regard to reaſon and abſurdity.) Eſſays. Vol. II. p. 455. 8vo. Edit. 1767.

by no means eſcaped the obſervation of many of the Heathens themſelves. Yet in the days of Chriſtianity it has met with a profeſſed Apologiſt, who perſuades himſelf that it's Gods do ſomewhere really exiſt!

But to return to the more immediate objects of our inquiry.

In the courſe of a diſplay of the doctrines of a future ſtate among the Pagans of Greece and Rome we find it acknowledged that even "the moſt ſublime efforts of philoſo-"phy cannot aſcertain it's exiſtence." [8] We are obliged to our Author, for confirming anew the important arguments of others in favour of the neceſſity of a divine revelation: a ſtrong preſumptive proof of

[8] "Since therefore the moſt ſublime efforts of "philoſophy can extend no farther than to point "out the deſire, the hope, or, at moſt, the proba-"bility of a future ſtate, there is nothing except a "divine revelation, that can aſcertain the exiſtence, "and deſcribe the condition of the inviſible country "which is deſtined to receive the ſouls of men after "their ſeparation from the body." Ch. xv. p. 468.

the

the authenticity of the Chriſtian Revelation ariſes in conſequence.

But the prevalence of an erroneous opinion that the end of the world was near at hand, " was productive" we are told, " of " the moſt ſalutary effects on the faith and " practice of Chriſtians." [9] " This ex- " pectation" it is added, " was countenan- " ced by the twenty-fourth chapter of St. " Matthew, and by the firſt Epiſtle of St. " Paul to the Theſſalonians." [1] Whatever erroneous opinions were derived from thoſe parts of Scripture, it ought ſeemingly to have been mentioned at the ſame time, that if St. Paul's *firſt* Epiſtle gave riſe to miſtakes concerning the approach of the day of judgment, he takes occaſion, in his *ſecond* written not long after, to combat this very error with no ſmall degree of earneſtneſs. NOW WE BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, BY THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS

[9] Ch. xv. p. 475.
[1] Note 59. p. lxix.

CHRIST,

CHRIST, AND BY OUR GATHERING TOGETHER UNTO HIM, THAT YE BE NOT SOON SHAKEN IN MIND, OR BE TROUBLED NEITHER BY SPIRIT, NOR BY WORD, NOR BY LETTER AS FROM US, AS THAT THE DAY OF CHRIST IS AT HAND. [2] After ſuch plain authentic notice of the falſhood of the opinion in queſtion, we are not certainly in any ſort called upon to account for *the difficulty* that our Author ſuppoſes to ariſe from the opinion's not having been found "agreeable to experience." [3] The near approach of the end of the world was not predicted by the Apoſtles, as our Author has too haſtily aſſerted: [4] and the opi-

[2] 2 Theſſ. Ch. ii. ver. 1 and 2.

[3] "In the primitive Church the influence of "truth was very powerfully ſtrengthened by an opi-"nion which, however it may deſerve reſpect for "it's uſefulneſs and antiquity, has not been found "agreeable to experience. It was univerſally be-"lieved that the end of the world, and the kingdom "of heaven were at hand." Ch. xv. p. 474.

[4] See Dr. Watſon's Second Letter.

nions

nions of others not founded on Scripture have no real claim to attention.

The doctrine of the Millennium is next treated of; and it is added that "a myſte-"rious prophecy which ſtill forms a part "of the ſacred canon, but which was "thought to favour the exploded ſentiment, "has very narrowly eſcaped the proſcrip-"tion of the Church." [5] But the truth is that this "exploded ſentiment" fell into diſrepute only becauſe the doctrine had been adulterated by the intermixture of thoſe ſenſual ideas which Cerinthus and his followers had invented, and which by no means agreed with the more rational belief of thoſe who modelled their faith according to the expreſs predictions of the Apocalypſe. Nor does the image which may be found in Irenæus, and which our Author ſtiles *one of the groſſeſt* that occurs on the ſubject [6],

[5] Ch. xv. p. 472.

[6] "One of the groſſeſt images may be found in Irenæus." (Note 62. p. lxix.) The reference made to the paſſage (l. v. p. 455.) proves it to be the ſame

bear any reſemblance to the impure ideas of the Heretics already mentioned. It conſiſts only in an extravagant and fabulous deſcription of the plenty of corn and grapes, ſeeds, fruits, and herbs that ſhould abound in the days of the Millennium, reported by Irenæus on the authority of Papias.

The objection aimed againſt the canonical authority of the Apocalypſe is thus farther ſtated.

" In the council of Laodicæa, the Apo-
" calypſe was tacitly excluded from the ſa-
" cred canon by the ſame churches of Aſia
" to which it was addreſſed; and we may
" learn from the complaint of Sulpicius Se-
" verus that their ſentence had been ratified

ſame as is quoted at length by Dr. Middleton in his Inquiry. His words in alluſion to this innocent but weak deſcription taken from Papias agree very exactly with thoſe of our Author. " He (Juſtin) aſ-
" ſerts likewiſe the doctrine of the Millennium in
" the groſſeſt ſenſe of it." (Free Inquiry, p. 38.) Miſcell. Works 4to. edit. 1722.)

" by

" by the greater number of Chriſtians of " his time." [7]

This objection ought to have been accompanied with a more exact and full ſtate of the caſe. From this it muſt for ever appear that the point in queſtion is ſtrictly problematical, and that in the courſe of the debate at leaſt neither ſide can claim a deciſive victory. If it cannot be abſolutely ſhewn that the Apocalypſe was tacitly approved of by the council, ſo neither can it be ſhewn that it was tacitly excluded.

The true ſtate of the caſe is briefly this. It ſeems plainly to have been the immediate object of the council not to eſtabliſh a complete canon of the ſcriptures, but to aſcertain only what books among thoſe that were deemed canonical ſhould be *publickly read* in the Churches. They decree firſt, that no books which were compoſed only by private perſons ſhould be read, nor any other that were not canonical; but only

[7] Note 65. p. lxix.

thoſe which belonged to the canon of the Old and New Teſtament. [8] They then proceed to determine [9] which of theſe ſhould be read, and in their liſt of the books of the New Teſtament the Apocalypſe is not found included.

No direct reaſon is given then for the omitting to make mention of the Apocalypſe. It is not proſcribed, but it is not enjoined to be read. [1] It has been conjectured therefore not without ſeeming probability, that this was occaſioned only by it's being thought too myſterious to be rightly underſtood by common hearers [2].

[8] Can. 59. Conc. Laod. Beveregii Synodicon, Ox. 1672. Tom. i. p. 480.

[9] Can. 60. ibid. 481.

[1] See Twell's Critical Examen of the New Text and Verſion of the New Teſtament, p. 3. where this point is fully conſiderod.

[2] See Bp. Coſin's Scholaſtical Hiſtory of the Canon of Scripture, ch. vi. lxii, and Bp. Gibſon's 3d Paſtoral Letter.

But of ſuch importance does this problematical objection appear to our Author, that he is able to aſſign no other cauſe for the Apocalypſe's having been received by the Proteſtant Churches, than " the advan- " tage of turning it's myſterious prophecies " againſt the ſee of Rome." [3]

We cannot indeed adopt the cauſe he has aſſigned, but we will ſupply him not with one reaſon in the place of it, but with many and abundant reaſons.

In leſs than threeſcore years after the council of Laodicæa, the Synod of Carthage reckons the Apocalypſe by name among the canonical books of the New Teſtament. [4] And in the ſeventh century, the ſixth general council fully eſtabliſhed the autho-

[3] " The advantage of turning thoſe myſterious " prohecies againſt the See of Rome, inſpired the " Proteſtants with uncommon veneration for ſo uſe- " ful an Ally."

Note 65. p. lxix.

[4] Conc. Carthag. Can. 47. Tom. 2. Conc. Labbe.

rity of this Synod, and confirmed it's decrees. [5]

The teſtimonies of the Fathers in favour of the authenticity of this book are numerous.

We may allege thoſe of Juſtin Martyr, Irenæus, Clemens, Tertullian, Clemens, Cyprian, and Lactantius; to omit mentioning ſeveral others. [6] We need not therefore ſeemingly be at a loſs, as our Author is, to account for the reception of the Apocalypſe even in the Greek Churches, when we find ſo many of the Greek as well as the Latin Fathers bearing teſtimony to it. Much leſs need we aſſign an unworthy and intereſted

[5] Bev. Synod. Can. 2. Tom. 1. p. 158.

[6] I. Martyr Dial. xx. 4 or 6. Irenæus, l. 4. c. 37. Origen Comment in Joann. xiv. 6, 7. Cyprian de bon. pudicit. xxii. 9. Lact. Ep. c. xlii. Tertull. adv. Marc. l. 3. c. xiv.

The ſeveral paſſages of the Fathers that bear teſtimony to the Scriptures may be ſeen under one view, in a very uſeful work by the Rev. Mr. Atkinſon, entitled, a Table of the Evidence of the Sacred Canon.

reaſon

reaſon for it's reception in the Proteſtant Churches.

Indeed the very eminent writer whom our Author has choſen to refer to (not ſurely for a confirmation of the whole of his remark) might have ſuggeſted to his thoughts the reaſons that have led the ſeveral Churches to receive the Apocalypſe, as canonical. On conſulting his elegant diſcourſes, we ſhall find the uſe of the Apocalyptic prophecies againſt the Church of Rome touched on by the hand of a Maſter; [7] but we ſhall find the ſame able interpreter of theſe prophecies agreeing with thoſe who conſider this book as more ſtrongly atteſted, than even any other book of the New Teſtament. [8]

[7] See Bp. Hurd's xiith Sermon, Vol. II. p. 208.

[8] Sermon X. p. 111. (note) Vol. II. 2d. edit. 12mo. 1733. The obſervation introduced there ought not to be omitted — "If the authority of this mo- "mentous book be indeed queſtionable, the Church "of Rome could hardly have failed long ſince to "make the diſcovery, or to triumph in it."

With

With regard to the complaint of Sulpicius Severus, it may be right to produce the whole paſſage. [9] His own opinion in favour of the authenticity of the Apocalypſe is at leaſt clear from it. He looks on it as a mark either of *folly* or *wickedneſs* not to have received the Apocalypſe. And while he *complains* in ſuch very ſtrong terms may we not conjecture that he meant rather to ſpeak of *many* of the Chriſtians of his time, than of *the greater number* of them ? [1]

One word, concerning " the condemna-
" tion of the wiſeſt and moſt virtuous of the
" pagans" ſtated by our Author, as the una-

[9] Quo tempore (Domitianus) Joannem Apoſtolum atque Evangeliſtam in Patmum inſulam relegavit, ubi ille arcanis ſibi myſteriis revelatis librum ſacræ Apocalypſeos, qui quidem a pleriſque aut *ſtulte* aut *impiè* non recipitur, conſcriptum edidit. Sulp. Sev. Hiſt. Lib. II. p. 98. edit. Amſt. 1659.

[1] Dr. Lardner in his tranſlation of the above paſſage has expreſsly rendered the word *pleriſque* by *many*. Credibility, Vol. XI.

nimous

nimous doctrine of the primitive Church. [2] It may not be improper to remark that "the vehement Tertullian" is here the only evidence appealed to. Nor is it on this occaſion only, but on many others alſo [3] that he is brought forward to view, as if we were to conſider him as our Author's fa-

[2] "The condemation of the wiſeſt and moſt "virtuous of the pagans, on account of their igno- "rance or diſbelief of the divine truth, ſeems to of- "fend the reaſon and the humanity of the preſent "age. But the primitive Church, whoſe faith was "of a much firmer conſiſtence, delivered over, with- "out heſitation, to eternal torture, the far greater "part of the human ſpecies. A charitable hope "might perhaps be indulged in favour of Socrates, "or ſome other ſages of antiquity, who had conſult- "ed the light of reaſon before that of the Goſpel "had ariſen. But it was *unanimouſly* affirmed that "thoſe who ſince the birth or the death of Chriſt, "had obſtinately perſiſted in the worſhip of the dæ- "mons, neither *deſerved* nor could *expect* a pardon "from the irritated juſtice of the Deity." Ch. xv. p. 437.

[3] See notes 39, 41, 45, 47, 49, &c. and p. 484.

vourite

vourite witneſs. It muſt be confeſſed, that the writings of this " zealous African," however they may on many accounts deſerve our reſpect, ſometimes alſo breathe a ſpirit altogether contrary to the plain dictates of Chriſtian charity, and ſtill oftener exhibit inſtances of a miſtaken piety, that is rather enthuſiaſtic, than rational. How far it became our Author to ſelect diligently the blemiſhes that ſtain the writings of this intemperate advocate of Chriſtianity; how far even " the melancholy duty impoſed on " the hiſtorian" on this as well as other occaſions may ſerve to plead his apology, [4] we may venture to aſſert is at leaſt uncertain.

[4] " The Theologian may indulge the pleaſing " task of deſcribing Religion as ſhe deſcended from " Heaven, arrayed in her native purity. A more " melancholy duty is impoſed on the hiſtorian. He " muſt diſcover the inevitable mixture of error and " corruption, which ſhe contracted in a long reſi- " dence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate " race of beings." Ch. xv. p. 450.

There

There may be thoſe among the Fathers of the Church, who have openly aſſerted the crime of "obſtinately perſiſting" in the worſhip of falſe deities, when they had it in their power to know the true God. St. Paul had declared men inexcuſable for their idolatry, even under a reference to the light of nature only. [5] But to warn men of their ſins, and to pronounce their abſolute condemnation in conſequence of thoſe ſins, are diſtinct things. It might well be ſaid, that thoſe obſtinate idolaters who wilfully ſhut their eyes againſt the light of nature and revelation, did not "*deſerve pardon*" of the Deity. [6] If our Author means to aſſert that the Fathers taught that neither could ſuch pardon "*be expected*" by any means, this requires farther proof; and cannot be granted on the ſole evidence of

[5] Rom. i. 20, 21.

[6] See quotation above, p. 63.

the inhuman and uncharitable declamation of " the ſtern Tertullian." [7]

But it is not the faith of the primitive Church alone, that undergoes the ſeverity of our Author's cenſure. The ſame doctrine, he aſſerts, is ſtill " the *public* doctrine " of *all* the Chriſtian Churches." [8] But he aſſerts it wholly without proof. I cannot but preſume to enter a proteſt againſt our Author's judgment, at leaſt in the name of one Church, the Church of England; and am bold to affirm that her mild deciſions are not ſtained with ſo foul a blot, as " the condemnation of the wiſeſt and moſt " virtuous Pagans." It is much to be lamented that our Author ſhould have included the Church of which he profeſſes

[7] See a quotation from Tertullian, Ch. xv. p. 474.

[8] " And yet, whatever may be the language of " individuals, it is ſtill the public doctrine of all " the Chriſtian Churches."

Note 68. p. lxx.

himſelf

himſelf a Member, in ſo ſevere a cenſure, without even attempting to bring proof of the truth of his aſſertion.

We come now to conſider our Author's diſquiſitions concerning the miraculous powers of the primitive Church. He has here taken occaſion to repeat to us ſeveral of the fallacious objections of Dr. Middleton.

One of the firſt of theſe objections, couched under an indirect inſinuation, is aimed againſt the claim of the Church to the gift of tongues, and is founded on an utter miſrepreſentation of a paſſage in Irenæus. Our Author has not indeed made any reference to the paſſage, in ſupport of his aſſertion, however it might naturally have been expected. I ſhall here, as well as in other inſtances where his too fond attachment to Dr. Middleton appears to have miſled him, report the words of both.

" Irenæus however," ſays Dr. Middleton, " declares it" (the gift of tongues) " to " have been indulged to many in his days.

" But it is very remarkable, that this pri-
" mitive Biſhop who aſcribes it ſo libe-
" rally to others, appears to have been in
" great want of it himſelf, for the propa-
" gation of the Goſpel in his own dioceſe,
" among the Celtæ or Gauls; where," AS DR. CAVE INTERPRETS HIS WORDS, " *it*
" *was not the leaſt part of his trouble, that he*
" *was forced to learn the language of the coun-*
" *try; a rude and barbarous dialect, before he*
" *could do any good upon them.*" [9]

The ſubſtance of this remark is thus repeated by our Author — " The knowledge
" of foreign languages was frequently com-
" municated to the contemporaries of Ire-
" næus, though Irenæus himſelf was left
" to ſtruggle with all the difficulties of a
" barbarous dialect whilſt he preached the
" Goſpel to the natives of Gaul." [1] — Let us now hear Irenæus ſpeak for himſelf.

[9] Dr. Middleton's Free Inquiry. p. 97. Vol. I. 2d. edit. of his works. Lond. 1752.

[1] Ch. xv. p. 475.

Far

Far from acknowledging that he was forced to *learn* the language of the country, or that he was left to ſtruggle with the *difficulties* of it, he will be found to have apologized only for his want of eloquence, of the knowledge of compoſition, and of the ornaments of ſtile in his writings, from his reſidence among the Celtæ, and his having been for the moſt part uſed to a *barbarous* dialect, inſtead of a poliſhed language. There is not indeed any mention made in the place where the paſſage is found, of the gift of tongues: the only object in view is to aſſign his motives for undertaking his work on Hereſies, and to prepare his reader not to expect any ornament of ſtyle, any poliſhed language from him. He is ſpeaking of the nature of the Celtic tongue, not of the manner in which he acquired it.

"But you will not expect from us," ſays he, "who reſide among the Celtæ, "and are for the moſt part employed in "the uſe of a barbarous dialect, any artifi- "cial compoſition of words, which we have "not

" not learned; nor any force and ſkill in " writing which we have not exerciſed our- " ſelves in, nor any beauty of diction nor " art of perſuaſion, with which we are not " acquainted." [2]

It will now appear plainly with what utter violence and injuſtice this paſſage has been preſſed into the ſervice of a favourite hypotheſis.

Dr. Middleton ſeems to have choſen to adopt at once the miſtaken interpretation of Dr. Cave. He has ſheltered himſelf under his authority in ſuch a manner as may naturally lead one to ſuſpect that he was doubtful of the ground he ſtood on. The aſſertions both of himſelf and our Author are wholly foreign to the true ſenſe of the paſſage: and the teſtimony of Irenæus

[2] Ουκ ἐπιζητησεις δε παρα ημων των εν Κελτοις διατριβοντων, καὶ βαρβαρον διαλεκτον το πλειστον αχολουμενων, λογων τεχνην ἡν ουκ εμαθομεν· ουτε δυναμιν συγραφεως ἡν ουκ ησκησαμεν, ουτε καλλωπισμον λεξεων, ουτε πιθανοτητα ἡν ουκ οιδαμεν·

Præf. adverſ. Hæres. I. 1. 2.

in

in no wiſe ſupporting therefore the argument intended to be drawn from it, the claim of the Church to the miraculous gift of tongues, ſo far as concerns the paſſage in queſtion remains ſtill unimpeached.

We may next trace our Author following the ſteps of Dr. Middleton in his deſcription of the prophetic viſions ſpoken of by the writers of the firſt ages. "The "divine inſpiration, whether it was con- "veyed in the form of a waking or of a "ſleeping viſion, is deſcribed as a favour "very liberally beſtowed on all ranks of "the faithful, on women as on elders, on "boys as well as biſhops. When their de- "vout minds were ſufficiently prepared by a "courſe of prayer, of faſting, and of vi- "gils, to receive the extraordinary impulſe, "they were tranſported out of their ſenſes, "and delivered in extaſy what was inſpir- "ed, being mere organs of the holy Spirit, "juſt as a pipe or flute is of him who blows "into it." [3] The writers who are ap-

[3] Ch. xv. p. 475.

pealed

pealed to in ſupport of this deſcription are not quoted by our Author with that minuteneſs of reference which is in general uſual with him, and for which he deſerves much credit. But ſince, Cyprian only excepted, they are the ſame as his admired guide Dr. Middleton has [4] referred to more particularly, we are not at a loſs to trace out the paſſages.

To ſpeak then of the *manner* in which the divine inſpiration is related to us to have been beſtowed, on the authority of Athenagoras, Juſtin Martyr, and Tertullian. For the aſſertion that it was "a favour very liberally beſtowed on all ranks "of the faithful," no authority whatever is produced.

"From the teſtimonies collected above," ſays Dr. Middleton, "we have ſeen, that

[4] Athenagoras in Legat. Juſtin Martyr Cohort. ad Gentes. Tertull. adv. Marcionit. l. iv. (Note 73. p. lxx) — In Dr. Middleton, p. 78. and 90.

"before

" before the Montaniſts had brought thoſe " *ecſtaſies* into diſgrace, the prophecy of the " orthodox, as well as that of the Heretics, " was declared to have been exerted in *ec-* " *ſtaſy*. And it appears to have been the " *current* opinion in thoſe earlier days, that " the Prophets alſo of the *Old Teſtament* re- " ceived and uttered their revelations in " *ecſtaſy*."

The teſtimonies alluded to by Dr. M. in ſupport of the former part of his aſſertion here, are, that of Cyprian, which treats indeed of viſions ſeen in ecſtaſy, but by no means deſcribes this ecſtaſy as Dr. Middleton himſelf does as a temporary madneſs — a paſſage of Suidas a *Heathen* writer who lived about the end of the *tenth* century, and who ſpeaks only of *Heathen* not of *Chriſtian* Prophets — a paſſage out of Philo the *Jew*, who only delivers his *own* ſentiments of Prophecy, not the opinion which the *Chriſtians* had of it — and Tertullian's deſcription of prophecy *in general*, not of the *particular* viſions of the Chriſ-

tians in the firſt ages, as " conſiſting in ſpi-
" ritual virtue." [5] Even this ſhort and *general* definition of the nature of Prophecy is found accidentally introduced in a ſentence relating not *to his own times*, but to *Adam*, and in which he is treating of the *deep ſleep* that God cauſed to fall upon him when he created woman, not of that *ecſtaſy* conſiſting in temporary madneſs which Dr. M. repreſents him ſpeaking of. [6]

But as theſe teſtimonies, that only of Cyprian excepted, have not been adduced by our Author, we are not called upon to re-examine them. — It may be ſufficient barely to aſſert under a reference to Dr. M.'s learned antagoniſts, [7] that it is by no

[5] See Dr. M.'s Works, 4to edit. p. 78.

[6] See the paſſage quoted in Tertullian De Animâ, Cap. 21. compared with Cap. 11. of the ſame Treatiſe — cecidit enim ecſtaſis ſuper illum, &c.

[7] See in particular Dr. Church's Vindication, Ch. vii. ſect. 4. and Dr. Brooke's Examination, Ch. v. p. 257, &c.

means

means *ſeen from them*, that his aſſertion is true. From the very nature of the teſtimonies it may be diſcovered even at firſt ſight, that ſome of the witneſſes appealed to are wholly incompetent.

For the truth of the latter part of his aſſertion Dr. M. quotes three ſeveral paſſages from the writers already mentioned. [8] And here tho' we cannot think the teſtimony of theſe *three* writers alone ſufficient to prove that the opinion in queſtion was the *current* opinion of the times, we may allow that their opinion concerning the Inſpiration of the Prophets of "*the Old Teſtament*" ſeems to have been nearly ſuch as Dr. M. repreſents it. But what end he could propoſe to himſelf to anſwer by this, when the point he had in view, was not to deſcribe the nature of the viſions of the *Prophets of the Old Teſtament*, but of *the firſt Chriſtians*, by no means appears.

[8] See note above, p. 72.

Our Author's deſcription founded on a reference to the *ſame* writers is therefore alleged no leſs inſufficiently. The writers he refers to, ſpeak of *the Prophets of the Old Teſtament*, according to the very purpoſe for which Dr. Middleton has introduced them; their declarations are *applied* as an actual teſtimony concerning the nature of the viſions *in the primitive Church.*

We may add, that the paſſage of Tertullian cannot by any means be admitted in evidence, ſince it is found in a work written after he favoured the opinions of Montanus. This appears from the very concluſion of the *ſame* ſentence, ("de quo inter nos et Pſychicos quæſtio eſt") [9] which, it is ſomewhat remarkable Dr. M. ſhould have kept out of ſight. By the term Pſychici the orthodox or Chriſtians in general are well known to be meant, whom Tertullian, after his converſion to Montaniſm diſtinguiſhed by that

[9] Tertull. contra Marcion. L. iv. p. 716. edit. Pamel.

appel-

appellation, in alluſion ſeemingly to St. Paul's oppoſition of the *animal* or carnal man to the ſpiritual man. [1] And it appears likewiſe therefore that in reality the idea that is given there of Prophecy, was that of the Montaniſts *only*.

But the erroneous deſcription that is given us of the Prophetic viſions of the firſt Chriſtians both by Dr. Middleton in calling the *ecſtaſy* ſpoken of "a temporary madneſs," and by our Author aſſerting that "they were tranſported out of their ſenſes" (an aſſertion which the paſſage in Cyprian already ſpoken of by no means confirms) was perhaps intended principally as a prelude to that which follows.

"The Prophecy of the Primitive Church" ſays Dr. Middleton, "by *viſion* or *ecſtaſy* "was of the ſame kind, as to it's outward "appearance, with *that divination by fury*, "as it was called among the Gentiles, "which was practiſed by the *Delphic Pythia*

[1] 1 Cor. Ch. ii. v. 14. ὁ ψυχικὸς ἀνθρωπος, &c.

"and

" and *Cumæan Sibyl*, when agitated by the " pretended power and inſtinct of the God. " Of which Cicero ſays, in way of *raillery*, " What authority can that madneſs have " which you call divine; that a wiſe man " ſhould not be able to foreſee, what a " madman can; and that he who has loſt " all human ſenſes, ſhould preſently ac- " quire divine ones." [2]

" Theſe deſcriptions," ſays our Author, " are not very unlike the prophetic fury, " for which Cicero expreſſes *ſo little* " *reve-* " *rence.*" [3] Here the ſame paſſage of Tully is referred to as in Dr. M.

But as theſe deſcriptions are not found to be applicable to the point in queſtion, we are not therefore at all called on to attend to what Cicero has ſaid *in way of raillery* of the Heathen divination by fury, which neither the *ecſtaſies* of the *Prophets of the Old Teſtament*, nor of the firſt Chriſtians at all reſembled. Dr.

[2] See Dr. M.'s Works, 4to edit. p. 80.
[3] Note 73. p. lxx.

Middle-

Middleton himſelf has helped us to the teſtimonies of Epiphanius, St. Jerom, and Miltiades, who aſſert expreſsly that the *true* Prophets never ſpoke in ecſtaſy, or madneſs of heart, but calmly and ſedately received and underſtood whatever was revealed to them. [4] They are adduced indeed by him for the purpoſe of ſhewing that ſuch deſcriptions "ſeem to ſhake the credit of "all prophecy," but they contain certainly the true and rational idea of divine inſpiration. And Origen, when he is treat- of the Pythian Prieſteſs, even *expreſsly* diſtinguiſhes between the Spirit of Prophecy, which prevailed in the *Chriſtian Church*, and the Spirit of Divination, with which the *Gentile Pythia* was wont to be poſſeſſed. "The being tranſported," ſays he, "when "propheſying into fits of ecſtaſy and a ma- "gical fury, ſo as to be by no means her- "ſelf, is not the work of a divine ſpi-

[4] Dr. M.'s Works, 4to. edit. p. 89.

"rit."

rit." [5] There is therefore not only no ſupport for ſuch a compariſon as is contended for, to be found in the writings of the Fathers, but there is expreſs teſtimony to the contrary. — The ecſtaſy of the firſt Chriſtians appears plainly to have been a kind of Trance only, ſuch as was frequent in the times of the Apoſtles, ſuch as St. Peter in particular fell into when he ſaw the viſion concerning the converſion of the Gentiles. [6]

But to proceed to take notice of the mention our Author has made of the power of raiſing the dead. — Here again he ſeems to tread cloſe in the ſteps of Dr. M. According to him, " in the very ſame age when one " Autolycus, an eminent heathen, challen- " ged his friend Theophilus Biſhop of An- " tioch, a convert and champion of the Goſ-

[5] " Αλλα ϗ το εις εκϛασιν ϗ μαγικην αγειν κα- " ταϛασιν την δηθεν προφητευουσαν, ὡς μηδαμως αυτην " εαυτη παρακολουθειν ου θειου πνευματος εργον εϛιν· Orig. contra Celſ. edit. Spenceri. p. 333.

[6] " Εν εκϛασει οραμα; Acts Ch. xi. v. 5.

" pel

pel, " *to ſhew him but one perſon who had* " *been raiſed from the dead*, on the condition " of turning *Chriſtian* himſelf upon it; " Theophilus diſcovers by his anſwer, that " he was not able to give him that ſatisfac- " faction." [7]

According to our Author, " A noble " Græcian, had reſted on this important " ground the *whole* controverſy, and pro- " miſed Theophilus, Biſhop of Antioch, " that if he could be gratified with the ſight " of a ſingle perſon who had been actually " raiſed from the dead, he would immedi- " ately *embrace the Chriſtian Religion.* It is " ſomewhat remarkable, that the Prelate of " the firſt eaſtern Church, however anxious " for the converſion of his friend, thought " proper to decline this fair and reaſonable " challenge." [8]

There is one material miſrepreſentation here in common with Dr. Middleton. It

[7] Dr. M.'s Works, 4to. edit. p. 60.
[8] Ch. xv. p. 476.

is not true, that Autolycus had reſted the *whole* controverſy (if by this be meant the whole controverſy reſpecting Chriſtianity in general) on the matter in debate, or that he had promiſed "he would immediately "embrace the Chriſtian Religion." The words of Theophilus, as well as other collateral arguments, plainly ſhew this. — "But with regard [9] to your denying the "reſurrection of the dead alſo. [1] For

[9] I conjecture the prepoſition περι to be underſtood here before το αρνεισθαι agreeably to the idiom of the preceding paragrah περι δε το σε καταγελαν μου, &c. Theoph. ad Autolyc. Lib. i. p. 33. edit. Ox. 12mo. 1684.

[1] Strictly, that "the dead are (or ſhall be) "raiſed" νεκρους εγειρεσθαι — That the preſent time uſed here may be underſtood to relate to a *future* reſurrection, there is abundant proof. See Luke xx. 37, 38. John v. 25. Acts xxvi. 8. and 1 Cor. xv. 29. and 42. in all which paſſages the preſent time is made uſe of to denote the *future* general reſurrection. Theophilus himſelf alſo in the former part of the book uſes the ſame expreſſion in the ſame ſenſe, where it cannot poſſibly admit of any other, and where the whole ſentence plainly ſhews that it was the doctrine of the *general* reſurrection that he diſbelieved

" you ſay, ſhew me even one that has been " raiſed from the dead, that ſeeing I may " believe." [2] *Believe* — what? certainly that which he is ſaid to have *denied* immediately before;—the doctrine of the *general* reſurrection, and that only. Our Author himſelf ſeems to be fully aware of this, ſince in the ſentence immediately preceding his mention of this ſtory of Autolycus his words are, " at ſuch a period, when faith could " boaſt of ſo many wonderful victories over " death, it ſeems difficult to account for " the ſcepticiſm of thoſe philoſophers, who " ſtill rejected and derided *the doctrine of the* " *reſurrection*," not, as ſhould otherwiſe have been ſaid, the claim of the Church to *the power of raiſing the dead.* It may not how-

lieved—Αλλα απιστεις νεκρους ΕΓΕΙΡΕΣΘΑΙ, οτι ΕΣΤΑΙ τοτε πιστευσεις θελων ϗ μη θελων. (Lib. 1. p. 22. edit. Oxon.) And before this in the ſame page, ΑΝΕΓΕΙΡΕΙ γαρ σου την σαρκα αθανατον συν τω ψυχη ὁ Θεος.

[2] Αλλα ϗ το αρνεισθαι σε νεκρους εγειρεσθαι· φης γαρ, δειξον μοι καν ενα εγηγερτα εκ νεκρων, ινα ιδων πιστευσω· Lib. i. p. 34.

ever be improper, for the ſatisfaction of others at leaſt, to ſubjoin ſome of the many expreſs paſſages occurring in the book referred to, from which it appears that the point in diſpute between Theophilus and his friend was the doctrine of the *general* reſurrection only.

We have referred already [3] for another purpoſe to one of thoſe paſſages, than which nothing can be more deciſive. It is immediately addreſſed to Autolycus. "You "diſbelieve the reſurrection of the dead; "when it *ſhall be*, then you will be forced "to believe it whether you will or not." But to turn to the paſſage itſelf in which Autolycus's requeſt is ſtated. [4] In what manner does Theophilus treat it? Does he reply to it as underſtanding it to be intended in objection to the power of raiſing the dead claimed by the Church? Far otherwiſe. He reproaches his friend very juſtly,

[3] See Note [1] p. 82.
[4] P. 34. edit. Ox. 1684.

for

for his inconſiſtency in believing the *reſurrection* of Heathen Deities, in believing that Hercules had ſurvived the flames that conſumed him, that Æſculapius had riſen again after being ſtruck dead by lightning, and yet diſbelieving the word of God. He goes on to deduce arguments for the credibility of a reſurrection from the very frame of nature, the return of ſeaſons, days and nights, the revival of fruits and ſeeds, and he concludes his argument by aſſerting expreſsly, that the wiſdom of God deſigns all theſe for proofs that he is able to effect *a general reſurrection of all men.* [5] He again refers him afterwards for *a proof of the reſurrection* [6] to a conſideration of the revolution of the heavenly bodies, and of the recovery of the human body after ſickneſs, which he ſtiles *a work of reſurrection* [7] to be ſeen in ourſelves. — How foreign and abſurd is

[5] Την ΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΗΝ αναστασιν απαντων ανθρωπων, p. 37.

[6] Προς αποδειξιν αναστασεως, ibid.

[7] Εργον αναστασεως, ibid.

all

all this reaſoning if we conſider it as relating to the queſtion concerning the power of the Church to raiſe the dead, how conſiſtent is it when applied to the queſtion of a general reſurrection, to which it is expreſsly declared to relate!

Thus far then the queſtion is duly cleared and freed from miſrepreſentation. Autolycus's incredulity conſiſted in his diſbelieving the doctrine of a *general reſurrection*, in his diſbelieving the power of *God* not the power of the *Church* to raiſe the dead. His *challenge* conſiſted in requiring to *ſee* one raiſed from the dead, that he might believe the doctrine of a reſurrection. — It was of a piece with his other demands. He appears before to have demanded to *ſee* God, in order to believe in his exiſtence. [8] But

[8] Αλλα κ̀ εαν φης· δειξον μοι τον Θεον σου, &c. p. 4 If it be objected here, that Theophilus only *ſuppoſes* he would ſay ſo, it will appear from the reaſoning that follows, and from the whole tenor of the argument, that he certainly had ſaid ſo.

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the challenge ſurely cannot be called "*reaſonable*" when the true ſtate of the queſtion is conſidered. — He had MOSES AND THE PROPHETS open as it were before him, he had his learned friend, himſelf *converted* by them and once believing as little as he did [9] ready to explain them: if he believed not theſe, neither was it probable he would believe, THOUGH ONE ROSE FROM THE DEAD. Theophilus ſeems plainly to have had an eye to this deciſive declaration of our Saviour, when he replies to his friend, "Perhaps alſo ſhould I ſhew you a "dead man raiſed, and living, you will "diſbelieve this alſo." [1] I cannot help remarking here that *the poſſibility* of complying with his friend's demand ſeems ſo plainly expreſſed by Theophilus in the words "ſhould I ſhew you," that he cannot perhaps ſtrictly ſpeaking be ſaid altogether

[9] See p. 38. Και γαρ εγω ηπιστουν τουτο εσεσθαι, &c.

[1] Ισως ϗ επιδειξω σοι νεκρον εγερθεντα, ϗ ζωντα, ϗ τουτο απιστησεις· p. 35.

to

to have declined the challenge. May it not rather be ſaid that he has declined the accepting it on that *needleſs* occaſion, than given room to ſuppoſe it could not be accepted at all?

In the reply of Theophilus we ſee ſurely very ſufficient reaſons alleged for his chooſing rather to try to convince his friend by plain reaſoning, than to refer him to the particular proof he had improperly demanded. And we ſee at the ſame time, that no ſuſpicion ariſes with regard to the ſuppoſed power of the primitive Church to raiſe the dead, when the matter is fairly ſtated. The diſpute was not concerning this power of the Church, and the demand of Autolycus ought not therefore to be alleged in evidence againſt it. — The poſitive teſtimony of Irenæus remains wholly unaffected by it.

It may not be improper to point out yet farther ſome circumſtances in this teſtimony, which ought particularly to be attended to. Irenæus mentions according to the juſt repreſentation that our Author has given

given us of his teſtimony, "that the miracle "was frequently performed *on neceſſary oc-* "*caſions by great faſting and the joint ſuppli-* "*cation of the Church of the place.*" It was not therefore an ordinary buſineſs; it was not a power exerted on *every* occaſion; the performance of the miracle required the preſence of a ſolemn aſſembly of the Church of the place, and their *joint* aſſiſtance: it required much previous devout preparation. We might therefore have aſked, had it even appeared (as it by no means has) that Autolycus's demand related to this power of the Church, whether to have ſatisfied Autolycus in this point could juſtly have been deemed one of thoſe *neceſſary occaſions* on which the Church ought to have aſſembled *with great faſting and joint ſupplication?* — Let it be remarked here, that it is plain Theophilus himſelf cannot be ſuppoſed to have been poſſeſſed of the power of raiſing a dead perſon to be ſhewn to his friend; — that he muſt at leaſt have applied to the *whole* Church. But can it indeed be ima-

gined that the Church ever aſſembled, or would aſſemble *on purpoſe* to raiſe a dead perſon at the *requeſt* of another; muſt it not rather be underſtood that their power was exerted *accidentally* as it were when a fit occaſion had newly preſented itſelf? The obdurate Autolycus could not in any reſpect juſtly lay claim to a particular exertion of the power of the Church merely at his requeſt, he who adhered obſtinately to his own Idol-Gods, [2] whoſe *impieties* as his friend Theophilus tells him, prevented his ſeeing God, [3] he who if the dead had been frequently raiſed [4] by the power of the

[2] Ειτα πιςευεις τα ὑπο ανθρωπων γινομένα αγαλμα-τα, Θεους ειναι, ϗ αρετας ποιειν· Lib. i. p. 25.

[3] ὑτω ϗ σοι, ω ανθρωπε, επισκοτουσιν αι ασεβειαι προς το μη δυνασθαι σε ὁραν τον θεον· ibid. p. 9.

[4] A very ingenious Critic has contended that Irenæus can only be underſtood to have ſpoken of the power of raiſing the dead that ſubſiſted in the *Apoſtolic* age, not in the primitive Church afterwards. See Dr. Donglas's Criterion, or Miracles examined. Lond. 1754. Note (a) p. 374. — Whether his remarks ſhould be thought ſatisfactory or not, or

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Church, enjoyed certainly in common with others, all the proper means of ſatisfying himſelf about the fact by due inquiry.

It has now appeared in ſeveral inſtances how unhappily our Author has adhered to Dr. Middleton. He treats next of the celebrated controverſy itſelf which that ingenious but treacherous Author gave riſe to. "Our different ſentiments" of it, he ſays, "will be much leſs influenced by any particular arguments, than by our habits of "ſtudy and reflection." [5] This ſtate of the matter, unleſs his expreſſions are properly qualified and explained, ſeems to carry with it a dangerous tendency. The fact, like many other circumſtances diſgraceful to mankind, may indeed be true, but it *ought* at leaſt to be otherwiſe, and we are unwilling to ſuppoſe that either our Author

point has been only to ſhew that if Irenæus does ſpeak of the primitive Church, his teſtimony cannot be affected by the ſtory of Autolycus, which is wholly foreign to the queſtion.

[5] Ch. xv. p. 476.

himſelf, or any one of a liberal and candid diſpoſition, will not be ready at all times to ſacrifice their "habits of ſtudy and re-"flection to particular arguments," if ſuch arguments ſhould be found valid on due examination.

Our Author has urged many plauſible reaſons for the perplexity which he profeſſes himſelf to labour under in defining with preciſion the limits of that period when the miraculous powers of the Church are ſuppoſed to have ceaſed.— Perhaps a few plain remarks may tend to remove this perplexity.

"If the truth of miracles," ſays he, "is "appreciated by their apparent uſe and "propriety every age hath unbelievers to "convince, heretics to confute, and idola-"trous nations to convert; and ſufficient "motives might always be produced to juſ-"tify the interpoſition of Heaven. And "yet ſince every friend to revelation is per-"ſuaded of the reality, and every reaſonable "man is convinced of the ceſſation of mi-"raculous powers, it is evident that there "muſt

" muſt have been ſome period in which " they were either ſuddenly or gradually " withdrawn from the Chriſtian Church. " Whatever æra is choſen for that purpoſe, " the death of the Apoſtles, the converſion " of the Roman Empire, or the extinction " of the Arian hereſy, the inſenſibility of " the Chriſtians who lived at that time will " equally afford a juſt matter of ſurpriſe. " They ſtill ſupported their pretenſions after " they had loſt their power." [6] It cannot be ſaid, ſtrictly ſpeaking, that "ſufficient mo- " tives to juſtify the interpoſition of Heaven" ſubſiſted in every age. The motives were no longer ſufficient when the proper end of miracles would have been deſtroyed by the continuance of them. In anſwer to the queſtion " why are not the ſame miracles " performed now as Jeſus did" St. Auſtin replies, " Becauſe they would have no ef- " fect unleſs they were wonderful, and if " they were cuſtomary, they would ceaſe to

[6] Ch. xv. p. 477.

be

" be wonderful." [7] Sufficient evidence having been once produced, men might afterwards juſtly be referred to this evidence alone for conviction, to the teſtimony of thoſe authentic records which were WRITTEN THAT WE MIGHT BELIEVE. [8] But what period then ſhall we aſſign for the ceſſation of miracles? Perhaps the error lies in requiring one certain period. It ſeems wholly reaſonable to conclude that the miraculous powers once granted were *gradually* withdrawn in proportion as there was leſs occaſion for them. If this concluſion be juſt, no one preciſe time of their ceſſation could be recorded. It may eaſily be imagined that miracles would remain uſeful for a longer time in ſome places than in

[7] Alio loco cum commemorâſſem quæ Dominus Ieſus fecit cum hic eſſet in carne, adjunxi, dicens, Cur, inquis iſta modo non fiunt? Atque reſpondi, Quia non moverent niſi mira eſſent; ſi autem ſolita eſſent, mira non eſſent.

Retract. L. i. C. xiv.

[8] St. John xx. 31.

others,

others, and they would be obſerved to ceaſe therefore at different times in different places. If plain teſtimony is afforded us alſo at leaſt of a partial ceſſation of miracles, of the decline, as it were of the extraordinary powers of the age, " the inſenſibility of the " Chriſtians who lived at the time" ſeems rather imaginary than real. Many different paſſages in St. Chryſoſtom who flouriſhed in the cloſe of the fourth century, when the ceſſation of miracles ſeems in itſelf probable, deſerve our attention in this reſpect.

Speaking of the Miracles wrought by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, he adds " But " becauſe *Miracles are not wrought now*, do " not therefore conclude that none were " wrought then; for *then they were uſeful*, " *but now they are not uſeful*." [9] And in another Homily, complaining of the dege-

[9] Μη τοινυν το ΜΗ ΓΙΝΕΣΘΑΙ ΝΥΝ ΣΗΜΕΙΑ, τεκμηριον ποιου του μη γεγενησθαι τοτε· καὶ γαρ τοτε ΧΡΗΣΙΜΩΣ ΕΓΙΝΕΤΟ, ΚΑΙ ΝΥΝ ΧΡΗΣΙΜΩΣ ΟΥ ΓΙΝΕΤΑΙ· Hom. 6. Tom. III. Ed. Sav. p. 276.

nerate

nerate lives of Chriſtians, he aſks "on what "now may they found their faith? On "Miracles? But theſe are not wrought." [1]

Several remarkable Teſtimonies to the ſame purpoſe may be found in other parts of his writings. [2] And Origen even in the century preceding mentions that a few traces only then ſubſiſted of the ſigns of the Holy Spirit, and bears plain teſtimony to a gradual diminution of miracles. [3]

Let us now turn to our Author's general reflections on Miracles. The deſcription that he gives us of the faith of modern

[1] Ποθεν ουν εχȣσι πιςευσαι; απο σημειων; αλλ' ȣ ταυτα γινεται· St. Chryſ. in 1. ad Tim. λογ. 1. p. 288. Tom. III. edit. Savil.

[2] See de Sacerdot. iv. 3. ſub fine. Ibid. iv. 6. Hom. XXII. in Matth. Hom. XXIV. in Joann. Hom. VI. in 1. Epiſt. ad Corinth.

[3] ΣΗΜΕΙΑ δε τȣ ἁγιȣ πνευματος κατ' αρχας μεν της Ιηστυ διδασκαλιας, μετα δε την αναληψιν αυτȣ ΠΛΕΙΟΝΑ εδεικνυτο· υςερον δε ΕΛΑΤΤΟΝΑ· πλην ΚΑΙ ΝΥΝ ΕΤΙ ΙΧΝΗ αυτȣ παρ' ΟΛΙΓΟΙΣ·

Origen. contr. Celſ. L. VII. p. 337. edit. Spenceri.

times,

times, is indeed melancholy and alarming. " A latent and even involuntary ſcepticiſm " adheres to the moſt pious diſpoſitions. " Their admiſſion of ſupernatural truths is " much leſs an active conſent, than a cold " and paſſive acquieſcence. Accuſtomed " long ſince to obſerve and to reſpect the " invariable order of nature, our reaſon, or " at leaſt our imagination is not ſufficiently " prepared to ſuſtain the viſible action of " the Deity." [4]

I would willingly hope, that there can be but little reaſon to think that ſuch ſcepticiſm adheres to " the moſt pious diſpoſi- " tions," or that they admit " the ſuperna- " tural truths of the Goſpel but with a cold " and paſſive acquieſcence." An active inquiry into the authenticity of Revelation, (and ſuch ſurely we muſt expect from pious diſpoſitions) will not fail to produce an active, ready, and willing conſent. May we not have good reaſon to ſuſpect that where

[4] Ch. xv. p. 478.

conviction is not the result of inquiry, the inquirer may have been influenced rather by his "habit of ſtudy and reflection," than by ſuch "particular arguments" as it is his duty to attend to. Later hiſtories do indeed ſet before us "the invariable order of "nature" rather than "the viſible action "of the Deity" employed in changing it's courſe, for the purpoſe of ſealing his authentic inſtructions in the ſight of his creatures. But this affords no argument againſt our believing fully the wonders of former ages, when ſufficiently atteſted to us. In ſuch caſe the ſpace of time which has paſſed ſince, may well be ſaid to be, in a manner, annihilated. Thro' the medium of authentic hiſtory, we are ſet in the place, as it were, of actual ſpectators of the events, and no "reſpect" can be due "to the invaria-"ble order of nature" that is not far exceeded by the reſpect due to "the authentic "wonders of the evangelic hiſtory," [5]

[5] "The real or imaginary prodigies of which "they ſo frequently conceived themſelves to be the "objects,

when the end plainly ſeems worthy of the interpoſition of God. A rational faith thus acquired, will indeed become naturally " a " deep impreſſion," [6] and may be juſtly celebrated as the Chriſtian's trueſt boaſt.

But the objection we have been conſidering, is in reality no other than the well known argument of Mr. Hume, clothed in a new form, for the preſent occaſion. It has been ſo often and ſo fully anſwered that it is needleſs to take farther notice of it. [7] We ſhall readily acknowledge that the doctors of the Church of England are to be reckoned among thoſe " more rigid," but

" objects, the inſtruments, or the ſpectators, very " happily diſpoſed them to adopt with the ſame eaſe, " but with far greater juſtice, the authentic wonders " of the Evangelic Hiſtory." Ch. xv. p. 479.

[6] " It is this deep impreſſion of ſupernatural " truths which has been ſo much celebrated under " the name of faith. Ibid.

[7] See Dr. Adams's Eſſay on Miracles — Dr. Campbell's Diſſertation — and the late Dr. Powell's Sermons.

orthodox teachers, who conſider " the mo-
" ral virtues as deſtitute of any value, or
" efficacy, in the work of our juſtifica-
" tion." [8] We will only add, that theſe rigid doctors, tho' they exclude the moral virtues from the *office* of juſtifying, teach at the ſame time the abſolute neceſſity of practiſing them.

" But the primitive Chriſtian," our Author juſtly remarks, " demonſtrated his
" faith by his virtues," [9] and in inquiring into the cauſes of the pure lives of the firſt Chriſtians, he adds, that " it is a very an-
" cient reproach, ſuggeſted by the ignorance
" or the malice of infidelity, that the Chriſ-
" tians allured into their party the moſt
" atrocious criminals, [1] but that this re-
" proach, when it is cleared from miſrepre-
" ſentation, contributes to the *honour* of the
" Church." [2] We readily acquieſce in the obſervation.

[8] Ch. xv. p. 479. [9] Ibid. [1] Ibid.
[2] Ch. xv. p. 480.

But

But we ought not perhaps to acknowledge ſo readily that the influx " of the moſt abandoned of ſinners" contributed ſo much to the *increaſe* of the Church [3] as he ſeems to imagine.

That many abandoned ſinners were converted in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, may readily be granted; but that the number of thoſe who cannot properly come under this deſcription was greater, may likewiſe be aſſerted.

The teſtimony of Origen, who in the opinion even of our Author, " from his " experience as well as reading, was inti- " mately acquainted with the hiſtory of the " Chriſtians" [4] is expreſs.

[3] " This reproach, when it is cleared from miſ- " repreſentation, contributes as much to the *honour* " as it did to the *increaſe* of the Church. The friends " of Chriſtianity may acknowledge without a bluſh " that many of the moſt eminent ſaints had been be- " fore their baptiſm *the moſt abandoned* of ſinners." Ch. xv. p. 480.

[4] Ch. xvi. p. 456.

" If

" If any one, ſays he, will candidly con-
" ſider us Chriſtians, we can produce him
" more who have been converted from a
" life not the worſt than from a very wick-
" ed courſe. For they *whoſe conſcience ſpeaks*
" *favourably in their behalf*, are diſpoſed to
" wiſh, that our doctrine concerning the
" future rewards of the good may be true;
" and ſo are *more* ready to aſſent to the
" Goſpel, than *profligate* men."[5] Let us re-
mark, that this account of the characters of
the firſt converts ſtands in direct contradic-
tion to the plain ſuggeſtion which our Au-
thor's deſcription leads to, that thoſe who
were ſatisfied with their own conduct were

[5] Ημεις δε ειτις κατανοησαι ημων ευγνωμονως τ
αθροισμα, πλειονας εχομεν παραστησαι τους ουκ απο χαλεπ
πανυ βιου ηπερ τους απο εξωλεστατων αμαρτηματων επιστρεψ
αντας· καὶ γαρ πεφυκασιν οἱ τα κρειττονα εαυτοις συνεγ
κοτες, ευχομενοι αληθη ειναι τα κηρυσσομενα περι της υ
του Θεου τοις κρειττοσιν αμοιβης ετοιμοτερον συγκατατιθεσθ
τοις λεγομενοις, παρα τους πανυ μοχθηρως βεβιωκοτας·

Origen contra Celſum. Lib. iii.. p. 150. edi
Spenceri.

le

leſs likely to become converts, than the profligate and abandoned. — He remarks, that "thoſe perſons, who in the world had followed, though in an imperfect manner, "the dictates of benevolence and propriety, "derived ſuch a calm ſatisfaction from the "opinion of their own rectitude, as rendered them much leſs ſuſceptible of the ſudden emotions of ſhame, of grief, and of "terror, which have given birth to ſo many "wonderful converſions." [6] The queſtion certainly is not about "*wonderful converſions*" when we treat of the many thouſands that were converted in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity: "the ſudden emotions of "ſhame, of grief, and of terror," cannot at leaſt be ſuppoſed to have taken place here, as general cauſes.

That Chriſt as well as his Apoſtles did indeed often addreſs themſelves "to men "and to women oppreſſed by the conſci-

[6] Ch. xv. p. 480.

"ouſneſs

" ouſneſs of their vices" [7] may be readily acknowledged. We do not find however that ſuch *alone* were converted, though the ſaving truths of the Goſpel were often more immediately urged to them, becauſe they ſtood moſt in need of them. Our divine Maſter may beſt apologize for his own conduct in a manner worthy of himſelf. " THEY THAT ARE WHOLE NEED NOT A " PHYSICIAN; BUT THEY THAT ARE " SICK."

" It is a very honourable circumſtance " for the morals of the primitive Chriſ. " tians," ſays our Author, " that even their " faults or rather errors were derived from " an exceſs of virtue." [8] This handſome Preface ſerves however as an introduction

[7] " After the example of their Divine Maſter, " the Miſſionaries of the Goſpel addreſſed them- " ſelves to men, and eſpecially to women oppreſſed " by the conſciouſneſs, and very often by the ef- " fects, of their vices." Ch. xv. p. 480. — But ſee Dr. Watſon's Apology, Letter iv. p. 99—103.

[8] Ch. xv. p. 481.

to

to ſome very ſevere cenſures. It is added that " the biſhops and doctors of the church, " whoſe evidence atteſts, and whoſe autho- " rity might influence the profeſſions, the " principles, and even the practices of their " contemporaries had ſtudied the Scriptures " with leſs ſkill than devotion," [9] that " ambitious to exalt the perfection of the " Goſpel above the wiſdom of philoſophy, " the zealous Fathers have carried the du- " ties of ſelf-mortification, of purity, and " of patience, to a height which it is ſcarce- " ly poſſible to attain" [1] — that " a doc- " trine ſo extraordinary and ſo ſublime muſt " inevitably command the veneration of the " people; but was ill calculated to obtain " the ſuffrage of thoſe worldly philoſophers, " who, in the conduct of this tranſitory " life, conſult the feelings of nature, and " the intereſt of ſociety." The account is concluded by remarking that " it was not

[9] Ch. xv. p. 481.
[1] Ch. xv. p. 482.

" in *this* world that the primitive Chriſ-
" tians were deſirous of making themſelves
" uſeful or agreeable." [2]

We cannot but object to theſe ſtrictures. Our Author refers only to the Treatiſe of Monsr Barbeyrac. [3] We have already had occaſion to ſpeak of the true character of his work. [4]

" *The Fathers ſtudied the Scriptures with*
" *leſs ſkill than devotion.*" Here the words of an able writer deſerve to be attended to. — " From ſuch *voluminous* writings, many
" ſtrange things may and have been pro-
" duced; but this is not *peculiar* to the Chriſ-
" tian Fathers; and if men or books are to
" be judged of *only* by their faults, who ſhall
" be ſaved? It would be thought very par-
" tial, and very unjuſt to glean from Dio-
" dorus, Herodotus, Livy, Pliny, Plutarch,
" and other good and ancient *Pagan* writers

[2] Ch. xv. p. 482.
[3] Note 85. p. lxx.
[4] See Preface to this Work.

" the

" the rubbiſh of all ſorts that may be found " in their writings—but this has been done " over and over again with the Fathers." [5] In fact many very valuable Criticiſms are intermixed with their errors. But theſe have been too often forgotten.

Nor can they ſurely who practiſed a life of virtue, and who were bound by their profeſſion to fulfil every precept of true benevolence, be accuſed juſtly of not having conſulted " the intereſt of ſociety." The almoſt continual ſtate of perſecution that the firſt Chriſtians laboured under, ought ſeemingly to be taken into account: under ſuch circumſtances they could not perhaps be expected to indulge, like other men, our Author's favourite principles of human nature, " the love of pleaſure, and the love " of action." [6]. Yet that they were

[5] Dr. Gregory Sharpe's Argument in Defence of Chriſtianity. Lond. 1755. p. 92.

[6] Ch. xv. p. 482.

" *uſeful*" even " in *this* world" in many reſpects may ſafely be affirmed.

" In their cenſures of luxury," it is added, " the Fathers are extremely minute and " circumſpect." [7] The charge is *general*, but we are referred for proof to the writings of *two* of them only, [8] of whom one is altogether a very exceptionable witneſs. The extravagancies of Tertullian, who even before his converſion to Montaniſm was of a ſevere enthuſiaſtic temper, are not a proper teſt of the opinions of the Fathers. Nor ought they any more to be judged of by the *ſingle* work of the Pædagogue of Clemens. This contained, we are told, " the " rudiments of ethics, as they were taught " in the moſt celebrated of the Chriſtian " Schools." [9] On what authority this aſſertion is made, I know not. Perhaps the deſcription that Monsr Barbeyrac gives of this work, who ſtiles it " a ſort of Cate-

[7] Ch. xv. p. 483.
[8] See Note 88. p. lxx.
[9] Note 87. p. lxx.

" chiſm

" chiſm or *Elements of Morality* for Begin-
" ners," [1] may have led our Author to advance ſtill farther in *his* deſcription of it. The work itſelf does not ſeem to give countenance to the idea. It is expreſsly addreſſed to *all* Chriſtians under the idea of *Children*, becauſe allegorically ſo called ſuch in the Scriptures, [2] and bears the title of the Pædagogue in this light only. The aſſertion ought certainly to have been proved, before a cenſure had been paſſed by implication on the moſt " celebrated of the Chriſ-

[1] " Ce n'eſt donc ici qu'une eſpece de Catechiſme ou d'Elemens de Morale pour les commencans." Traitè &c. Ch. v. p. 45.

[2] Επει τοινυν απεδειξαμεν ΠΑΙΔΑΣ ημας τους παντας ὑπο της γραφης καλουμενους ου μονον, αλλα κ᾽ τους Χριστω κατηκολουθηκοτας ημας νηπιους ΑΛΛΗΓΟΡΟΥΜΕΝΟΥΣ, &c. Cap. vii. p. 129. Edit. Oxon. 1715. And another Chapter is expreſsly written againſt ſuch as ſuppoſe the appellation of children to ſignify the learning of the firſt elements. — Προς τους υπολαμβανοντας τῳ των παιδιων κ᾽ νηπιων προσηγορικῳ τῳ των πρωτων μαθηματων αινιττεσθαι διδαχην. (Title of the viith Chapter.)

" tian

" tian Schools" as well as on the work itſelf. Clemens indeed we know was at the head of the celebrated *Catechetical* School at Alexandria, but it remains to be proved that his Pædagogue formed the ground of Inſtruction to the Catechumens either there or elſewhere. But the Chriſtians alſo " were not " leſs averſe to the buſineſs than the plea- " ſures of the world. Their ſimplicity was " offended by the uſe of oaths, by the " pomp of magiſtracy, and by the active " contention of public life; nor could their " humane ignorance be convinced that it " was lawful on any occaſion to ſhed the " blood of their fellow-creatures, either by " the ſword of juſtice, or by that of war, " even though their criminal or hoſtile at- " tempts ſhould threaten the peace and " ſafety of the whole community." [3]

Let us ſay rather that their *piety was offended* at the nature of thoſe oaths which were in common uſe among the Heathens,

[3] Ch. xv. p. 436.

and

and which they ſometimes propoſed to them as a deciſive teſt of their opinions. We learn from the relation of the martyrdom of Polycarp, that he was urged more than once to ſwear by the fortune of Cæſar. His final reply was, "ſince thou oſtentatiouſly "requireſt me to ſwear by the fortune of "Cæſar, pretending as you ſay to be igno-"rant who I am, hear me profeſs freely — "I AM A CHRISTIAN." [4]

That *ſome* of the firſt Chriſtians were averſe to the buſineſs of war and government cannot be diſputed. The offices and employments which they declined were often clogged with ſuch circumſtances and conditions as, in their opinion, interfered wholly with the precepts of Chriſtianity.

[4] Επιμενοντος δε παλιν αυτου και λεγοντος, ΟΜΟΣΟΝ ΤΗΝ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ ΤΥΧΗΝ· ο Πολυκαρπος ει κενοδοξεις, φησιν, ινα ομοσω τῳ Καισαρος τυχῃ, ως λεγεις προσποιουμενος αγνοειν ος τις ειμι, μετα παρρησιας ακουε· ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΟΣ ΕΙΜΙ·

Euſeb. Eccl. Hiſt. L. IV. C. xv.

Thoſe

Thoſe very forms of oaths, which they conſidered as idolatrous, were ſometimes enjoined as the neceſſary conditions of being admitted into office. The reaſon of their conduct will therefore in ſuch caſes, be as evident, as it is honourable.

But it cannot certainly be aſſerted truly, that they in general diſclaimed all uſe either of "the ſword of juſtice, or of war, even "on any occaſion." The expreſs declaration of St. Paul, that THE MAGISTRATE BEARETH NOT THE SWORD IN VAIN, cannot but be ſuppoſed to have had it's due weight with them. We find this text expreſsly quoted by Irenæus in ſpeaking of civil Government. [5] For a proof, that the firſt Chriſtians contributed in many reſpects to promote the buſineſs of civil ſociety, we may appeal even to our Author's own acknowledgment, that they "were per-"mitted to increaſe their ſeparate property

[5] Lib. V. C. 24.

"by

" by all the lawful means of trade and in-
" duſtry." [6]

It is well known alſo, that far from declining the buſineſs of war altogether, whole Legions of Chriſtians ſerved in the Imperial Armies. — It is admitted by our Author, that " ſome indulgence might perhaps be " allowed to thoſe perſons who, *before their* " *converſion*, were already engaged in ſuch " violent and ſanguinary occupations." [7] Can it be imagined that thoſe multitudes of Chriſtian Soldiers which Hiſtory makes mention of, were *all* ſoldiers *before their converſion?* The particular inſtances which occur of ſome who renounced the profeſſion, may be properly and honourably accounted for by the particular circumſtances in which they found themſelves. Such was the caſe of Marcellus, whoſe hiſtory is at leaſt very imperfectly, if not unfairly repreſented by our Author.

[6] Ch. xv. p. 495.
[7] Ch. xv. p. 486.

" *It could ſcarcely be expected, that any go-*
" *vernment ſhould ſuffer the action of Marcel-*
" *lus the Centurion to paſs with impunity.* On
" the day of a public feſtival, that officer
" threw away his belt, his arms, and the
" enſigns of his office, and exclaimed with
" a loud voice, that he would obey none
" but Jeſus Chriſt the eternal King, and
" that he renounced for ever the uſe of car-
" nal weapons, and the ſervice of an idola-
" trous maſter." [8]

For the authenticity of this repreſentation of Marcellus's ſtory, we are referred to the genuine Acts of the Martyrs, publiſhed by Ruinart. " The account of the martyrdom " of Marcellus," we are told, " bears every " mark of truth." [9] We need only to refer to this very *ſame* account, to ſhew that our Author's repreſentation of the ſtory is not juſt. But if we turn firſt to the works of Monsr de Voltaire, we ſhall find a nar-

[8] Ch. xv. p. 566.
[9] Note 144. p. lxxxv.

rative

rative agreeing more exactly with that of our Author, than the relation of Ruinart, to which he refers. Both Voltaire and our Author have ſuppreſſed that part of Marcellus's declaration which ſerves fully to juſtify his conduct, and to point out the true reaſons of it.

" A Centurion, of the name of Marcel-
" lus, at a Feaſt given for the victory of
" Galerius, flung his belt and his arms on
" the ground, crying out aloud that he was
" a Chriſtian; and that he would no longer
" ſerve Pagans. The zeal of Marcellus
" was pious, but it was not reaſonable.
" Chriſtianity did not enjoin him to ſet an
" example of ſedition, *and there is no country*
" *in the world, where ſo raſh an action would*
" *not be puniſhed.* [1]

[1] Un Centurion nommé Marcel, aſſiſtant a une Fêre, qu'on donnoit pour la victoire de Galere, jetta par terre ſa ceinture et ſes armes, diſant tout haut qu'il etoit Chretien, et qu'il ne vouloit plus ſervir des Payens. Le zele de Marcel etoit pieux, mais il n'etoit pas raiſonnable. Le Chriſtianiſme ne lui or-

Let us now ſtate the words of Marcellus himſelf. They are ſufficient in themſelves to vindicate him from the unjuſt imputation thrown upon his conduct.

" If the condition of ſoldiers is ſuch, that " *they are obliged to ſacrifice to the Gods and* " *Emperors*, I throw away my rod and my " belt, I quit my ſtandard, and I renounce " the profeſſion of arms." [2] It is plain from hence, that he renounced his profeſſion, not thro' any ſudden fit of enthuſiaſm, not without the moſt cogent reaſons, but becauſe he found himſelf *at the very time*

donnoit point de donner l'exemple de la ſedition, et il n'eſt point de Pays au monde, ou l'on ne punît une action ſi temeraire.

Hiſt. Generale. C. V. (Diocletien.)

[2] Ex hoc militare Imperatoribus veſtris deſiſto, et deos veſtros ligneos et lapideos adorare contemno, quæ ſunt idola ſurda et muta. Si talis eſt conditio militantium, ut diis et Imperatoribus *ſacra facere compellantur:* ecce projicio vitem et cingulum; renuntio ſignis, et militare recuſo.

Ruinart Acta Mart. p. 303.

obliged

obliged to offer ſacrifice, in contradiction to the dictates of his conſcience.

But to return to our Author's delineation of the general character of the Chriſtians. "—It was impoſſible that the Chriſtians, "without renouncing a more ſacred duty, "could aſſume the character of ſoldiers, of "magiſtrates, or of princes. This indo-"lent, or even criminal diſregard to the "public welfare, expoſed them to the con-"tempt and reproaches of the Pagans, who "very frequently aſked what muſt be the "fate of the empire, attacked on every ſide "by the barbarians, if all mankind ſhould "adopt the puſillanimous ſentiments of the "new ſect?" [3]

In alluſion to this queſtion we are told, that "as well as we can judge from the "*mutilated* repreſentation of Origen, his "adverſary Celſus, had urged his objection "with great force and candour. [4]—An

[3] Ch. xv. p. 486.
[4] Note 101. p. lxxi.

exa-

examination of the paſſage itſelf will ſerve to place this matter in a very different light.

It is to be remarked that Origen expreſsly denies the truth of Celſus's accuſation, and aſſerts that it is needleſs to anſwer his objection, becauſe it proceeds wholly on a falſe ſuppoſition. [5] Could it even otherwiſe be imagined therefore, is it at leaſt probable that he ſhould have mutilated an objection which he meant to oppoſe openly as wholly void of truth? But his general method alſo ſeems to beſpeak the utmoſt fairneſs in his proceedings. He does not interweave the objections of his adverſary into the body of his work, but ſtates them ſeparately, to all appearance, in his own words. The work of Celſus alſo was in all probability extant at the time when he made this reply. In ſuch caſe had he even

[5] Ειτα παλιν, ὡς εθος τω Κελσω, φυρει εν τοις εξης, λεγων ἁ ȣδεις ημων ανεγραψε, ϗ φησι τοιαυτα· &c. — προς τȣτων ȣκ ερει λογος, ȣ γαρ λεγει τις ημων·

Orig. contra Celſ. L. VIII: p. 425. edit. Spencer.

been

been inclined to treat his adverſary unfairly, he muſt yet ſurely have been with-held from the attempt, thro' the fear of detection. And as the work is not extant now to have recourſe to for the purpoſe of comparing it with Origen's anſwer, it may be added that it muſt require ſeemingly an extraordinary degree of ſagacity to be able to diſcover clearly the *deſigned mutilation* of any particular paſſage. The charge exhibited againſt Origen therefore ſeems altogethes haſty and unjuſt.

In ſpeaking of the diſcipline of the Chriſtian Church, our Author has treated of it's revenue. *Some* of his aſſertions at leaſt are by no means ſupported by the authorities appealed to.

" It was diligently inculcated," we are told, " that in the article of Tythes the " Moſaic Law was ſtill of divine obligation, " and that ſince the Jews, under a leſs per- " fect diſcipline, had been commanded to " pay a tenth part of all that they poſſeſſed, " it would become the diſciples of Chriſt " to

" to diſtinguiſh themſelves by a ſuperior " degree of liberality." [6]

The teſtimony more immediately appealed to in ſupport of this aſſertion, is that of Irenæus. [7] On conſulting the paſſage itſelf, it ſeems to be plain that Irenæus, far from inculcating *a ſuperior degree of liberality* towards the Miniſters of the Goſpel, of whom our Author expreſsly treats in the preceding ſentence, enjoins only a greater degree of benevolence in general. He is treating of the difference of the offerings required from Chriſtians, from thoſe required under the Law. He remarks accordingly, that " they indeed (the Jews) *had* the *tenths* " of their poſſeſſions conſecrated, but they " who have received liberty ſet apart *all* " their poſſeſſions to the uſe of God, giving " them chearfully and freely not in a leſs " proportion, ſince they enjoy greater hope; " like the poor widow who caſt her whole

[6] Ch. xv. p. 496.
[7] Note 130. p. lxxiii.

" ſub-

" ſubſtance into the treaſury of God." [8] Muſt it not now be thought that it is the object of Irenæus to recommend only a ſuperior degree of liberality towards the poor? At leaſt it certainly is not *diligently* inculcated by him, that " in the article of Tythes, the " Moſaic Law was ſtill of divine obliga- " tion," ſince the matter is mentioned only accidentally as it were, with a view to his general deſign of proving the ſuperior excellence of the Goſpel. This interpretation of the paſſage is plainly confirmed by Irenæus's declaration elſewhere, which our Author has likewiſe appealed to. [9] " Inſtead of paying *tythes*, the Lord has

[8] Illi quidem decimas ſuorum habebant conſecratas: qui autem perceperunt libertatem omnia quæ ſunt ipſorum ad dominicos decernunt uſus, hilariter et liberè dantes ea, non quæ ſunt minora, utpote majorem ſpem habentes; viduâ illâ et paupere hic totum victum ſuum immittente in gazophylacium Dei. Irenæus adv. Hæres. L. IV. C. xxiv.

[9] Note 130. p. lxxiii.

" enjoined us to divide all our poſſeſſi-
" ons to the *poor.*" [1] This paſſage proves the very reverſe of what it ought to prove, in order to juſtify the appeal made to it. — It recommends liberality to the *poor*, not to the *Prieſthood.*

But the Apoſtolical Conſtitutions, with the notes of Cotelerius, are alſo appealed to. [2] " The Conſtitutions introduce this divine " precept" (concerning Tythes) " by declar-
" ing that prieſts are as much above kings,
" as the ſoul is above the body." Since the notes of Cotelerius are expreſsly recommended to our attention, it may appear ſomewhat ſingular that while the above paſſage has been induſtriouſly brought forward to view, the remark made upon it ſhould have been paſſed over in ſilence. The learned Commentator infers from the mere in-

[1] Propter hoc Dominus pro eo quod eſt non mæchaberis, nec concupiſcere præcepit: et pro eo quod eſt *decimare*, omnia quæ ſunt *pauperibus* dividere.
Iren. adv. Hæres. L. IV. C. 27.

[2] Note 130. p. lxxiii.

ternal

ternal evidence of the paſſage that ſuch a ſentiment could never have come from the Apoſtles. The very paſſage in queſtion in his opinion affords therefore a plain argument againſt the authenticity of theſe Conſtitutions. [3] When the ſeveral different arguments that have been very forcibly urged to prove the ſpuriouſneſs of this work altogether are attended to, it may occaſion juſt matter of ſurprize that the work ſhould have been at all appealed to. [4]

For a proof of the wealth of the Church, "*the opinion* of the Magiſtrates that the "Chriſtians of Rome were poſſeſſed of very "conſiderable wealth," [5] is next alleged from a Hymn of Prudentius. [6] It ſhould have been added from the ſame teſtimony that this opinion proved falſe in the event,

[3] Conſt. Apoſt. Lib. ii. 34. (Patr. Apoſt. edit. Cotelerii)

[4] See Dr. Lardner's Credibility, Vol. VIII. p. 355, 358, and 391.

[5] Ch. xv. p. 496.

[6] Note 132. p. lxxiv.

the expected treaſures not having been found. It is admitted indeed that " we " ſhould liſten with diſtruſt to the ſuſpici- " ons of ſtrangers and enemies;" but it is added that " they receive a very ſpecious " and probable colour from two circum- " ſtances,"—from the Biſhop of Carthage's having collected above eight hundred and fifty pounds ſterling, on a ſudden call of charity, to redeem the brethren of Numidia, and from the Roman Church's having received in a ſingle *donation* the ſum of two hundred thouſand ſeſterces from a ſtranger of Pontus. [7]

Concerning the firſt circumſtance it ſhould be remarked at leaſt that the ſum collected aroſe plainly from an *extraordinary* exertion of benevolence proportioned to the occaſion. It is expreſsly ſpoken of as ſuch in the letter which accompanied the donation. [8] It was the joint contribution alſo

[7] Ch. xvi. p. 496.

[8] Quæ omnia iſtic ſecundum literas veſtras fraternitas noſtra cogitans, et dolenter examinans promptè

both of the Clergy and *People*, [9] and it appears plainly that many different congregations, as well as the Church of Carthage itſelf, had contributed according to their abilities. [1] On the whole perhaps it ſeems difficult therefore to form any ſuch certain calculation of the number of contributors, as, when the urgency of the occaſion, and the extraordinary eagerneſs that was manifeſted on it, are conſidered, may afford a deciſive Idea of the wealth of Chriſ-

promptè omnes et libenter ac *largiter* ſubſidia nummaria fratribus contulerunt; ſemper quidem ſecundum fidei ſuæ firmitatem ad opus Dei proni, *nunc tamen magis ad opera ſalutaria contemplatione tanti doloris accenſi.*

Cypr. Ep. LXII.

[9] —Miſimus autem ſeſtertium centum millia nummum, quæ iſtic in Eccleſiâ. cui de Domini indulgentiâ præſumus, Cleri et *plebis* apud nos conſiſtentis collatione collecta ſunt. Cypr. Ep. LXII.

[1]—collegarum quoque et conſacerdotum noſtrorum qui et ipſi cum præſentes eſſent, et ſuo, et *plebis* ſuæ nomine quædam pro viribus contulerunt. Ibid.

tians

tians in the early ages. It is at leaſt plain to what worthy occaſions they ſeem to have appropriated their poſſeſſions.

From the other inſtance moſt certainly, no concluſion ſuch as our Author has enforced, can be collected. The "ſtranger of "Pontus" was Marcio the Heretic. The mention of his excommunication gives riſe to the mention of the riches which he poſſeſſed, and which, to adopt the very words of Tertullian, "he had brought into the "the Church. [2] This expreſſion ſurely can hardly be underſtood to prove that he had made *a donation* of his wealth to the Church. It ſeems to prove only that a Member of the Church, a ſingle Individual, was himſelf poſſeſſed of ſuch wealth. And it is at leaſt certain from the very letter of

[2] Ubi tunc Marcion Ponticus Nauclerus? Ubi Valentinus?

—— ſemel et iterum ejecti, Marcion quidem cum ducentis ſeſtertiis quæ Eccleſiæ intulerat.

Tertull. de Præſcript. Heret. C. xxx.

the

the Paſſage, that he was ſuffered to retire from the boſom of the Church, with the poſſeſſions which he had brought into it. A proceeding that argues great integrity in the Church at that time, and a great contempt of riches. Of the two inſtances therefore inſiſted on, as giving colour to the ſuſpicions of the enemies of the Church, the one can ſcarcely be ſaid to be by any means deciſive, and the other while it is far from affording any poſitive proof that the ſuppoſed *donation* was ever made to the Church, proves certainly that it was at leaſt returned to the Donor, when he was ejected from it as an unworthy Member. Yet theſe circumſtances are confeſſedly "the "only ones that have reached" our Hiſtorian's "knowledge, which define any pre-"ciſe ſums, or convey any diſtinct idea." [3]

Our Author's conjectures concerning the Revenue of the Church, are followed by a ſhort account of the diſtribution of it. "The

[3] Ch. xv. p. 496.

"Biſhop

" Biſhop was the natural ſteward of the " Church; the public ſtock was entruſted " to his care without account or controul; " the preſbyters were confined to their ſpi- " ritual functions, and the more dependent " order of Deacons was ſolely employed in " the management and diſtribution of the " eccleſiaſtical revenue." [4] The whole of this deſcription is founded *only* on a reference to the Apoſtolical Conſtitutions. — What degree of credit is due to their authority, has been ſhewn already. [5] Our Author is miſtaken in his aſſertion that " the " public ſtock was entruſted to the care of " the Biſhop without account or controul." By the deciſions of the Council of Antioch the Biſhops were amenable to the Provincial Synod, even if they applied the Revenues of the Church otherwiſe than the Preſbyters and Deacons approved of: if they miſapplied them to their own uſes they were to

[4] Ch. xv. p. 497.
[5] See p. 123. above.

be

be puniſhed at the diſcretion of the Synod. [6] Amidſt ſuch different checks on the Biſhop's adminiſtration, and conſidering farther that the oblations were deſigned for the ſupport of the lower Clergy and the relief of the poor, it ſeems difficult to conceive that the Revenues of the Church ſhould ever actually have been embezzled, however ſome of it's unfaithful Stewards might have wiſhed to avail themſelves of it's treaſures. Nor indeed do either the paſſages in Cyprian or the Canons of the Council of Illiberis [7] that our Author has appealed to prove any actual embezzlement of the Revenues of the Church, however it appears from them that many of the Clergy had fallen into the moſt melancholy degeneracy of manners. Theſe teſtimonies ſeem to have been ſtrained beyond their natural meaning, when it is aſſerted that by ſome of it's unfaithful Stewards *the riches*

[6] Can. 25. Conc. Antioch. (Beveregii Synodicon, Tom. I.

[7] Cyprian de Lapſis, p. 89. Epiſtol. 65. 19 and 20th Canons of the Council. (Note 138. p. lxxiii.)

" *of the Church* were laviſhed in ſenſual plea-
" ſures, by others perverted to the purpoſes
" of private gain, of fraudulent purchaſes,
" and of rapacious uſury." [8] Our Au-
thor himſelf appears indeed to doubt whe-
ther " we may give credit to the vehement
" declamations of Cyprian" altogether; and
he candidly acknowledges that the " gene-
" ral uſes to which the liberality of the
" Chriſtian people was applied, reflected
" honour on the religious ſociety. Accord-
" ing to the diſcretion of the Biſhop, the
" ſacred patrimony of the poor was diſtri-
" buted to ſupport widows and orphans,
" the lame, the ſick, and the aged of the
" community; to comfort ſtrangers and
" pilgrims, and to alleviate the misfortunes
" of priſoners and captives, more eſpecially
" when their ſufferings had been occaſioned
" by their firm attachment to the cauſe of
" religion. A generous intercourſe of cha-
" rity united the moſt diſtant provinces,
" and the ſmaller congregations were cheer-

[8] Ch. xv. p. 497.

" fully

" fully aſſiſted by the alms of their more " opulent brethren." [9] After this candid picture of the benevolence of the primitive Church, we are ſurprized to meet with the invidious ſuggeſtion that follows, that " ſuch " an inſtitution paid leſs regard to the merit " than to the diſtreſs of the object," and that therefore, as it ſeems to be aſſerted, it " very materially conduced to the progreſs " of Chriſtianity. [1]

The diſcipline of the Chriſtian republic has been ſtated by our Author, as one of the five cauſes of the growth of Chriſtianity. [2] The exerciſe of the right of excommunication is naturally conſidered as a ſtriking part of the diſcipline of the Church. But with what conſiſtency can it be intimated, that the exerciſe of this power, delineated as it is in all it's moſt gloomy horrors, [3] could ſerve to add to the number of Chriſtian converts?

[9] Ch. xv. p. 498.
[1] Ibid.
[2] Ch. xv. p. 450.
[3] Ch. xv. p. 498. to 501.

The ſtrict diſcipline of the Church would apparently deter thoſe from entering into it's boſom, whoſe Characters but ill agreed with the purity it required. Yet, we have been told, that "many of the moſt emi-"nent ſaints had been before their baptiſm "the moſt abandoned of ſinners." [4]

Some ſevere ſtrictures on Epiſcopal Government are introduced under the head of excommunication and penance. The *ſingle* inſtance of Cyprian, whoſe character is placed before us in the moſt invidious light is made the occaſion of paſſing a *general* cenſure on the Biſhops of the firſt ages. [5]

[4] Ch. xv. p. 480. See above, p. 102.

[5] "The Biſhops, whoſe paternal care extended "itſelf to the government of both worlds, were ſen-"ſible of the importance of theſe prerogatives, and "covering their ambition with the fair pretence of "the love of order, they were jealous of any rival "in the exerciſe of a diſcipline ſo neceſſary to pre-"vent the deſertion of thoſe troops which had in-"liſted themſelves under the banners of the Croſs, "and whoſe numbers became every day more conſi-"derable. Ch. xv. p. 501.

Yet

Yet the conduct even of Cyprian himself will appear to be ſtated altogether very partially and imperfectly. The reaſons which juſtify his declarations are wholly omitted. It will be neceſſary to ſtate the ſtory briefly from the very Epiſtle that is appealed to, after having firſt repeated the laboured but unjuſt cenſures of our Author.

" From the imperious declamations of " Cyprian, we ſhould naturally conclude, " that the doctrines of excommunication " and penance formed the moſt eſſential " part of religion; and that it was much " leſs dangerous for the diſciples of Chriſt " to neglect the obſervation of the moral " duties, than to deſpiſe the cenſures and " authority of their Biſhops. Sometimes " we might imagine that we were liſtening " to the voice of Moſes, when he com- " manded the earth to open and to ſwallow " up in conſuming flames the rebellious " race which refuſed obedience to the prieſt- " hood of Aaron, and we ſhould ſometimes

ſuppoſe

" ſuppoſe that we heard a Roman Conſul " aſſerting the Majeſty of the Republic, " and declaring his inflexible reſolution to " enforce the rigour of the laws. If ſuch " irregularities are ſuffered with impunity " (it is thus that the Biſhop of Carthage " chides the lenity of his colleague) if ſuch " irregularities are ſuffered, there is an end " to EPISCOPAL VIGOUR; an end of the " ſublime and divine power of governing " the Church, and an end of Chriſtianity " itſelf." [6]—Let us now inquire into the cauſe of Cyprian's declarations.

Feliciſſimus, who had been excommunicated not only by Cyprian but by a ſynod of many Biſhops for a variety of heinous crimes, ſuch as embezzlement of money, debauching of virgins, and adultery, had applied to Cornelius Biſhop of Rome, who appears to have been ſomewhat intimidated by the threats of thoſe who had come to him. [7] It is on this occaſion that Cy-

[6] Ch xv. p. 501.

[7] Legi literas tuas, frater cariſſime quas per Saturum

prian writes to his brother to prevent his being intimidated, in words which, when

turum fratrem noſtrum Acoluthum miſiſti, et dilectionis fraternæ et Eccleſiaſticæ diſciplinæ et ſacerdotalis cenſuræ ſatis plenas, quibus ſignificâſti Feliciſſimum hoſtem Chriſti, non *novum*, ſed *jampridem ob crimina ſua plurima et graviſſima abſtentum, et non tantum meâ ſed plurimorum co-epiſcoporum ſententiâ condemnatum*, rejectum a te illic eſſe; et cum veniſſet ſtipatus catervâ et factione deſperatorum, vigore pleno, quo Epiſcopos agere oportet pulſum de Eccleſiâ eſſe, de quâ jampridem cum ſui ſimilibus, Dei majeſtate et Chriſti Domini et judicis noſtri ſeveritate depulſus eſt: *ne ſchiſmatis et diſſidii auctor, ne pecuniæ commiſſæ ſibi fraudator, ne ſtuprator virginum, ne matrimonioram multorum depopulator atque corruptor*, ultra adhuc ſponſam Chriſti incorruptam præſentiæ ſuæ dedecore, et impudicâ atque inceſtâ contagione violaret.

Sed enim lectâ alia tuâ Epiſtolâ, frater, quam primis literis ſubjunxiſti, ſatis miratus ſum: cum animadvertiſſem te minis atque terroribus eorum qui venerant, aliquantum eſſe commotum; cum te, ſecundum quod ſcripſiſti, aggreſſi eſſent, cum *ſummâ deſperatione comminantes*, quod ſi literas quas attulerant non accepiſſes, publice eas recitarent, et *multa turpia et probroſa*, et ore ſuo digna proferrent.

Cypr. Ep. lix.

fully

fully related, will place the matter in a light ſomewhat different from that in which it appears in the *abridged* ſpeech which our Author has given him. " But if the affair " be thus, *that the boldneſs of abandoned men* " *is feared, and if the wicked may effect by* " *raſhneſs and deſperation what they cannot by* " *by right and equity*, there is an end to " Epiſcopal vigour, and to the ſublime and " divine power of governing the Church; " nor can we continue any longer to be " Chriſtians, *if it is come to this that we are* " *afraid of the threats and ſnares of profli-* " *gate men.*" [8]

[8] Quod ſi ita res eſt, ut nequiſſimorum timeatur audacia, et quod mali jure atque æquitate non poſſunt, temeritate ac deſperatione perficiant, actum eſt de Epiſcopatus vigore, et de Eccleſiæ gubernandæ ſublimi ac divina poteſtate; nec Chriſtiani ultra aut durare aut eſſe jam poſſumus, ſi ad hoc ventum eſt ut perditorum minas atque inſidias pertimeſcamus. Cypr. Ep. lix.

To

To look back now on the fanciful commentary of our Author. We cannot certainly "naturally conclude from the declamations of Cyprian, that the doctrines of "excommunication and penance formed the "moſt eſſential parts of religion; and that "it was much leſs dangerous for the diſciples of Chriſt to neglect the obſervance "of the *moral duties*, than to *deſpiſe* the cenſures and authority of Biſhops."—It appears that it was on account of the violation of the *moral duties* that the cenſure of excommunication was inflicted; it appears that Feliciſſimus and his adherents more than *deſpiſed* this cenſure; they uttered open threats, and tried to intimidate Cornelius from doing his duty. A candid obſerver will not therefore probably regard the declamations of Cyprian as *imperious*; he will rather view his conduct in the light of that of a Governor acting with proper ſpirit and firmneſs, and very juſtly animating his brother to avoid the meanneſs of betraying the cauſe of diſcipline thro' a paltry fear.

It is not the *lenity* of his colleague he chides, but his timidity. Our Author is by no means juſtified in his concluding remark, " that the " acquiſition of ſuch abſolute command " over the conſciences and underſtanding " of a congregation, however obſcure or " deſpiſed by the world, is more grateful " to the pride of the human heart, than the " poſſeſſion of the moſt deſpotic power, " impoſed by arms and conqueſt on a re- " luctant people." [9] Where, it may be aſked certainly, is " *ſuch abſolute command* " *over the conſciences and underſtandings of a* " *congregation*" diſplayed in the mere enforcement of the juſt cenſure of an abandoned Member of the community; where is " *the pride of the human heart*" to be diſcerned, in the diſdaining to yield to the menaces of an inſulting crowd? It is the more remarkable that the conduct of Cy-

[9] " Cyprian had renounced thoſe temporal ho- " nours which it is probable he would nevertheleſs " have obtained; but the acquiſition, &c. Ch. xv. p. 502.

prian

prian ſhould have been ſo unjuſtly cenſured ſince the right of excommunication is openly acknowledged. [1] It muſt be acknowledged alſo, that the preſervation of government is as eſſential to the welfare of ſociety as the firſt eſtabliſhment of it. Had Cyprian acted differently, his conduct might juſtly have been called puſillanimous.

Our Author's attempt to account for the growth of Chriſtianity from ſecondary cauſes does not end with the diſplay of the five principal cauſes which he has choſen to inſiſt on. One circumſtance remains yet behind, which, as we find it ſtated, is to be looked on as almoſt ſufficient to explain it's rapid and extended propagation.

But ſhould we be inclined to attribute ſome part of the ſucceſs of Chriſtianity to the ſcepticiſm of the Pagan world, it ſurely

[1] "It is the undoubted right of every ſociety to "exclude from it's communion and benefits, ſuch "among it's members as reject or violate thoſe re-"gulations which have been eſtabliſhed by general "conſent." Ch. xv. p. 498.

cannot be thought to have had any great ſhare in the work. If the minds of many were already eſtranged from their own numberleſs deities, can it yet be conceived that they would be altogether willing to embrace a new religion, in which they could diſcern *no deity* at all, for the object of their worſhip? That the firſt Chriſtians were for this very reaſon in general conſidered as Atheiſts our Author has afforded us ſufficient proof. If the generality had conceived an averſion for the abſurd cuſtoms of their own external rites, would they yet readily become converts to a form of worſhip, ſimple and unadorned, and undoubtedly very ill calculated to attract the ſervile veneration of the people?

The extent of our Author's Hiſtory does not carry us into thoſe times, in which the ſpirit of Chriſtianity became corrupted, and the pure religion of Jeſus unhappily received into it's boſom the treacherous pageantry of paganiſm. The natural ſimplicity of it's worſhip could not but be preſerved, while

while it ſtill continued at open war even with the leaſt offenſive ceremonies of idolatry.

But why conclude alſo that the incredulity of the ſpeculative philoſopher would ſo readily communicate itſelf to the multitude; that the people, incapable ſurely in general of comprehending the refined ſcepticiſm of their ſuperiors, would yet at once forſake thoſe doctrines "to which they had yielded "the moſt implicit belief?" [2] If we may argue from preſent facts, (and it is a poſition of our Author's, that "the human heart

[2] "On public occaſions the philoſophic part "affected to treat with reſpect and decency the reli-"gious inſtitutions of their country; but their ſe-"cret contempt penetrated through the thin and "aukward diſguiſe, and even the people when they "diſcovered that their deities were rejected and de-"rided by thoſe whoſe rank or underſtanding they "were accuſtomed to reverence, were filled with "doubts and apprehenſions concerning the truth of "thoſe doctrines to which they had yielded the moſt "implicit belief." Ch. xv. p. 504.

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" is ſtill the ſame") [3] it is fully ſeen that thoſe very ceremonies which have unhappily produced in our times the melancholy effect of precipitating the higher ranks of men into a total deſertion of religion, ſtill retain at the ſame time their full hold on the minds of the people. The multitude has not in any ſort ſhaken off the chains of bigotry in conſequence of the free and avowed principles of their ſuperiors.

It is granted that the higher ranks of the Pagans, in practice, ſtill " affected to " treat with reſpect and decency the religi- " ous inſtitutions of their country." [4] And it would require ſurely more penetration than uſually falls to the lot of the people to diſcern " their ſecret contempt." [5]

But it may even be doubted alſo whether among the higher ranks of the Pagans the abſurdities of Idolatry were ſo fully ſeen, at the time of the appearance of Chriſtianity,

[3] Note 112. p. lxxii.

[4] P. 504. [5] Ibid.

as our Author is willing to imagine. [6] The force of cuſtom and education in the caſe of a new religion is to be ſet in oppoſition to the ſuggeſtions of reaſon. Theſe, which too often hide from men the moſt glaring abſurdities, ſeem to have concealed from many even of the moſt enlightened Pagans, the extravagance of their religion.

This ſyſtem of reaſoning alſo which ſeeks to account for the growth of Chriſtianity from the ſcepticiſm of Pagans is certainly contradicted by fact, by the repeated proceedings of the Pagans themſelves.

" The impatient clamours of the multi-
" tude, dooming the Chriſtians to the ſe-
" vereſt tortures, on the ſtated returns of
" the public games and feſtivals," [7] but

[6] " When Chriſtianity appeared in the world—
" human reaſon had already obtained an eaſy triumph
" over the folly of Paganiſm." Ch. xv. p. 503.

[7] " The impatient clamours of the multitude
" denounced the Chriſtians as the enemies of Gods
" and men, doomed them to the ſevereſt tortures,
" and venturing to accuſe by name ſome of the moſt
diſtin-

ill agree with the idea of an actual diſpoſition to receive the religion of Chriſtians, and to forſake the Gods to whoſe memory theſe games and feſtivals were dedicated. On the whole, ſurely our Author muſt at leaſt be ſaid to have drawn far too general an inference, when he ventures to aſſert that "thoſe who are inclined to purſue ſuch "reflections," as a conſideration of the ſcepticiſm of the Pagan world ſuggeſts, "inſtead of viewing with aſtoniſhment the "rapid progreſs of Chriſtianity, will per-"haps be ſurpriſed, that it's ſucceſs was "not ſtill more rapid and ſtill more univer-"ſal." [8]

That the peace and union of the Roman empire facilitated the progreſs of Chriſtia-

"diſtinguiſhed of the new ſectaries, required with "irreſiſtible vehemence that they ſhould be inſtantly "apprehended and caſt to the lions." Ch. xvi. p. 543.

[8] Ch. xv. p. 405.

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nity, [9] will readily be granted; and it has been ingeniouſly remarked, that this circumſtance may ſerve to point out to thoſe who are curious to inquire into the reaſon of the late appearance of Chriſtianity, the propriety of that fullneſs of time which was fixed on by the providence of the Almighty, for the introduction of Revelation.

Our Author's calculations of the numbers of the firſt Chriſtians muſt at leaſt be allowed to be in part conjectural, they may perhaps be proved falſe. In the inſtance of the calculation drawn from the ſuppoſed populouſneſs of Antioch, the evidence appealed to is altogether inſufficient even in our Author's own judgment. He ſeems to have forgotten that he had before ſpoken of the very writer whom he now appeals to in the moſt contemptuous terms. [1]

[9] "It has been obſerved, with truth as well as "propriety, that the conqueſts of Rome prepared "and facilitated thoſe of Chriſtianity." Ch. xv. p. 405.

[1] Note 67. p. xlix.—"John Malela—BUT THE

But the authority of St. Chryſoſtom is appealed to alſo, to ſhew that the Church of Antioch conſiſted but of one hundred thouſand perſons, while it is at the ſame time calculated that "the whole number of "it's inhabitants was not leſs than half a "million." [2]

We may juſtly wonder that St. Chryſoſtom's calculation of the number of the inhabitants of Antioch ſhould not have been laid before us as well as his calculation of the number of Chriſtians. It occurs in the very ſame page from whence the latter is confeſſedly borrowed; [3] yet it has been entirely omitted. St. Chryſoſtom computes

"AUTHORITY OF THAT IGNORANT GREEK IS "VERY SLIGHT. He ridiculouſly derives from Ca- "rus, the city of Carrhæ, and the province of Caria, "the latter of which is mentioned by Homer."

[2] Ch. xv. p. 507.

[3] Chryſoſtom, Tom. I. p. 592. "I am indebt- "ed for theſe paſſages, though not for my inference, "to the learned Dr. Lardner. Credibility of the "Goſpel Hiſtory, Vol. XII. p. 370." (Note 159. p. lxxiv.

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the whole number of inhabitants at two hundred thouſand only, not at half a million with our Author; and if his computation therefore is to be admitted, the Chriſtians formed *the half*, not the "*fifth* "*part* of that great city," according to our Author's calculation.

The teſtimony of Origen alſo is fallaciouſly quoted while it is made uſe of to prove the ſmallneſs of the number of the Chriſtians in Egypt. "The body of the "natives, a people diſtinguiſhed by a ful- "len inflexibility of temper, entertained the "new doctrine with coldneſs and reluc- "tance; and even in the time of Origen it "was rare to meet with an Egyptian who "had ſurmounted his early prejudices in "favour of the ſacred animals of his coun- "try." [4]

The paſſage in Origen contains only a general remark. He does not treat in any

[4] Ch. xv. p. 509. The Note (N. 164. p. lxxiv.) appeals to Origen contra Celſ. Lib. I. p. 40.

ſort of the number of Chriſtians in Egypt in his time, but of the prejudices of the Jews which he accounts for by the known force of cuſtom. " That ſuch is the nature " of man, he adds, will be plain to thoſe who " conſider that they who have been once pre- " judiced in favour of the traditions of their " country, are not eaſily turned from them, " even when the moſt vile; an Egyptian " therefore would not quickly be perſuaded " to deſpiſe the cuſtoms he has received " from his Fathers, ſo as not to think an " irrational animal a God, or not to abſtain " from taſting the fleſh of the animal, were " death itſelf to be the conſequence." [5]

[5] Ὁτι δε τοιȣτον τι πεπονθεν ἡ ανθρωπινη φυσις, δηλον εςαι τοις κατανοȣσιν ὁτι ὁι απαξ προληφθεντες ϗ εν αιχιςαις ϗ οικειαις παραδοσεσι πατερων, ϗ πολιτων, ȣκ ευχερως μετατιθενται· ȣ ταχεως γȣν Αιγυπτιον πεισαι αν τις καταφρονησαι ὡν εκ πατερων παρειληφεν ωςε μη νομισασθαι Θεον τοδε το αλογον ζωον, η μεχρι θανατȣ φυλαξασθαι απο τȣδε τȣ ζωου κρεων γευσασθαι.

Orig. contra Celſ. Lib. i. p. 40. Edit. Spencer.

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But it is by no means aſſerted here that the prejudices of the Egyptians *had not* been overcome in the minds of many, however difficult the taſk. The prejudices of the Jews which are compared here with thoſe of the Egyptians, *were* overcome in the caſe of many thouſands.

Our Author proceeds to calculate the number of the Chriſtians of Rome, about the middle of the third century. [6] The record on which he founds his Idea of the

[6] "The Church of Rome was undoubtedly the "firſt and moſt populous of the empire: and we are "poſſeſſed of an authentic record which atteſts the "ſtate of religion in that city about the middle of "the third century, and after a peace of thirty-eight "years. The clergy at that time conſiſted of a "Biſhop, forty-ſix preſbyters, ſeven deacons, as "many ſub-deacons, forty two acolythes, and fifty "readers, exorciſts, and porters. The number of "widows of the infirm, and of the poor, who were "maintained by the oblations of the faithful, "amounted to fifteen hundred." (Ch. xv. p. 510.) The Note, (Note 167. p. lxxiv.) refers to Euſebius, L. vi. C. 43.

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ſmallneſs of the number of Chriſtians, compared with the number of the inhabitants, as it is ſtated by the writer himſelf from whom he borrows it, leads to a very different concluſion.

The paſſage as quoted by our Author is introduced in Euſebius on the occaſion of ſpeaking of the ſchiſmatic Novatus. — It follows immediately "*All* whom the favour "and goodneſs of the Lord maintains; "whom neither *ſo great* and ſo neceſſary a "multitude in the Church, a rich and nu- "merous company thro' the providence of "of God, together with a *great and innu- "merable people* could turn away from ſuch "deſperation and call back into the boſom "of the Church." [7] Euſebius however,

[7] ὃς παντας ἡ τȣ δεσποτου χαρις ϗ φιλανθρωπια διατρεφει· ὁν ȣδε ΤΟΣΟΥΤΟ ΠΛΗΘΟΣ ϗ ȣτως αναγκαιον εν τη εκκλησια διὰ της τȣ Θεȣ προνοιας πλουσιος τε ϗ ΠΛΗΘΥΩΝ ΑΡΙΘΜΟΣ, μετα ΜΕΓΙΣΤΟΥ ϗ ΑΝΑΡΙΘΜΗΤΟΥ ΛΑΟΥ απο της τοιαυτης ἀπογνωσεως τε ϗ απαγορευσεως ενετρεψε τε ϗ ανεκαλεσατο εις τὴν εκκλησιαν.

H. E. Lib. vi. C. 43.

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it may be ſaid, ſpeaks rather of the number of Chriſtians as conſidered in itſelf, than as compared with the whole number of inhabitants, which our Author eſtimates, on the loweſt calculation, at a million. But ſo far at leaſt as his calculation of the number of Chriſtians is farther founded on "the "example of Antioch," it certainly muſt be objected to, ſince we have ſeen that his calculation of the number of Chriſtians at Antioch ſtands expreſsly contradicted by the teſtimony of St. Chryſoſtom. [9] Perhaps alſo, it is in reality far more juſt to conſider the number of converts to a new and perſecuted religion, in itſelf only, than as compared with the whole number of inhabitants of an immenſe city. We may rather wonder that a religion ſo circumſtanced ſhould have gained ſo many converts, than

[8] "From reaſon, as well as from the example "of Antioch, we may venture to eſtimate the Chriſ- "of Rome at about fifty thouſand." Ch. xv. p. 310.

[9] See above p. 147.

that

that they ſhould bear no greater proportion to the whole number of inhabitants.

But the mode itſelf of deducing the calculation, founded as it is wholly on the ſuppoſed " proportion of the Preſbyters " and the poor to the reſt of the people" [1] is liable to much uncertainty. Even in modern times we may obſerve the numbers of the poor to differ much not only in different Cities, but even in different parts of the ſame Cities. Much leſs can we apply any ſuch Rules to diſtant Ages. We do not know ſufficiently the exact methods obſerved in relieving the poor. Many muſt have received occaſional relief who were not enrolled on the Liſts. Let it be added alſo that at the period of which Euſebius treats the Church had ſuffered under the ſeverity of Decius's perſecution. The expulſion of Novatian and Novatus happened in the year two hundred and fifty-one, two years before which Decius had aſcend-

[1] Note 168. p. lxxiv.

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ed the Throne. And it is fallacious therefore to ſpeak of "a peace of thirty-eight "years" [2] when a perſecution of the moſt terrible nature had now ſucceeded it. Many Chriſtians had now been put to death in the courſe of it, many alſo had fallen from the profeſſion of their faith, [3] and others certainly muſt be ſuppoſed to have fled from Rome. If even at this period the Church was numerous and opulent enough to ſupport fifteen hundred poor, it is an aſtoniſhing proof of the great prevalence of Chriſtianity. Still ſtronger concluſions may be deduced ſometimes from the circumſtances in which the votaries of Chriſtianity were placed than even from the greatneſs of their numbers.

[2] See above, Note, p. 149.

[3] It is well known that the defection of Chriſtians during this terrible perſecution gave riſe to the famous controverſy concerning *the lapſed*. See the works of Cyprian.

But why indeed lay any ſtreſs on uncertain calculations? The teſtimonies of Tacitus and Pliny afford us poſitive and unſuſpected evidence. Nor do I ſee why that candid allowance [4] ſhould ſo humanely be extended to their "vague expreſſions" which is not in any ſort granted to the "ſplendid exaggeration" of Juſtin Martyr. [5] Their teſtimonies certainly do not ſo much ſtand in need of it, and it cannot be ſaid that "the meaſure of their belief "was regulated by that of their wiſhes." [6]

[4] "It is with the ſame candid allowance that "we ſhould interpret the vague expreſſions of Taci-"tus, and in a former inſtance of Pliny, when they "exaggerate the crowds of the deluded fanatics who "had forſaken the eſtabliſhed worſhip of the Gods." Ch. xv. p. 509.

[5] Ch. xv. p. 512.

[6] "But this ſplendid exaggeration, which even "at preſent it would be extremely difficult to recon-"cile with the ſtate of mankind, can be conſidered "only as the raſh ſally of a devout but careleſs "writer, the meaſure of whoſe belief was regulated "by that of his wiſhes." Ch. xv. p. 512.

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But the language of Tacitus " is almoſt " ſimilar to the ſtyle employed by Livy, " when he relates the introduction and ſup- " preſſion of the rites of Bacchus." [7] Perhaps the ſimilitude on an accurate compariſon will not be eaſily diſcovered. It is a common indefinite mode of expreſſion to ſpeak of " a great multitude," [8] and it does not ſeemingly ſtand in need of the aid of conjecture to juſtify it. The reaſon that may be given for the ſtile of Livy will not at all apply to the narrative of Tacitus. In the former caſe, the Roman government was really alarmed, on account of the reputed numbers of the Bacchanals who might well be expected to riſe in arms. And the Hiſtorian accordingly relates the real apprehenſions of the ſenate. In the latter caſe, in however criminal a light the unhappy victims of Nero's cruelty might otherwiſe be regarded, they had at leaſt

[7] Ch. xv. p. 509.

[8] Ingens multitudo. Tacit. xv. 44.

uniformly

uniformly ſhewn themſelves obedient ſubjects, and they are expreſsly deſcribed as ſelected only as ſo many deſtined ſacrifices, to ſuppreſs if poſſible the rumour that had prevailed againſt the emperor. Tacitus therefore could have no occaſion for adopting a language ſuited to expreſs the fears of the Roman people.

Much leſs can this reaſoning be applied to the teſtimony of Pliny. His letter ſhews that he was alarmed only by the number of thoſe that would be in danger of *ſuffering* [9] ſhould a rigid perſecution be enforced, not of thoſe who might endanger the peace of the Roman government through a rebellious diſpoſition. His conduct is evidently that of the prudent politician, deſirous of ſaving the lives of his maſter's ſubjects, not of the affrighted magiſtrate, dreading an inſurrection. [1]

[9] Viſa eſt enim res digna conſultatione, maxime propter *periclitantium* numerum. Plin. Epiſt. xcvii. Lib. x.

[1] The candour of our Author celebrates the Roman

But perhaps it will ſtill be contended that allowance muſt be made for an oratorical ſtile. It ſhould be remarked here, that he acquaints Trajan that " the temples which were almoſt forſaken, *begin* to be frequented, that the ſacred ſolemnities after a long intermiſſion, *are revived*, and that the victims likewiſe are every where bought up, whereas for ſome time there *were* few purchaſers. [2] So that could he be ſuppoſed to have been at all influenced by fear, it appears that at the actual time of his writing, the proſpect of affairs was ſuch as might inſpire him with freſh hopes. What appearances are there then of exaggeration?

Roman Governor, by the title of the *humane* Pliny. Yet this humane Governor, diſſatisfied with the teſtimony that even thoſe who had *revolted* from the religion of the Chriſtians had given of the innocence of their worſhip and the purity of their manners, judges it even the more neceſſary to examine *by torture* two unhappy *women*. Surely he exhibits a bad ſpecimen of his own *humanity*. See his letter already quoted.

[2] See the Letter, as before.

But

But the very improbability of the ſuppoſition, duly conſidered, might otherwiſe ſerve to refute it. [3]

We may again appeal alſo to Lucian, who as our Author acknowledges, relates that "under the reign of Commodus his "native country of Pontus was filled with "Epicureans and Chriſtians." [4] It is added however in reference to this teſtimony of Lucian, that "Chriſtianity muſt "have been very unequally diffuſed over

[3] This argument is placed in a ſtrong light by a late able writer. "Theſe are," ſays he, "Pliny's "expreſſions, and we muſt either ſuppoſe that the "Governor of a province writing to an Emperor "about a difficulty which embarraſſed his admini-"ſtration, and requeſting his directions how he "ſhould proceed, uſes the arts of oratory, and to-"tally miſleads *him* whom he will be obliged to "follow, or we muſt confeſs that the Chriſtians in "that extenſive and remote country, on the border "of the Euxine Sea, *far exceeded in number the other* "*inhabitants.*" Dr. Powell's Sermons, p. 161.

[4] Ch. xv. p. 507.

"Pontus

" Pontus, ſince in the middle of the third " century there were no more than ſeventeen " believers in the *extenſive dioceſe* of Neo-Cæſarea." [5] In the paſſage itſelf referred to, the *extenſive dioceſe* of Neo-Cæſarea is not ſpoken of, but *the town and neighbourhood* only. [6] And ſince it has been pointed out to us how ſmall the number of Chriſtians in thoſe parts is reputed to have been when St. Gregory was made Biſhop of Neo-Cæſarea, it ought ſurely to have been added from the teſtimony of the ſame Au-

[5] Note 154. p. lxxiv.

[6] Our Author's reference is not made to the original paſſage in St. Gregory of Nyſſa's life of Gregory Thaumaturgus, but to Tillemont. Even in Tillemont, however, only *the town and it's environs* are ſpoken of. " Mais tous les habitans *de la* " *ville, et des environs* etoient encore dans les tenebres " du paganiſme, et l'on n'y pouvoit compter que " dix ſept Chretiens." (Tillemont Memoires de l' Hiſt. Eccleſ. Tom. IV. p. 675. edit. de Bruxelles. 1706.) See the original paſſage agreeing with this interpretation, in St. Gregory of Nyſſa's works, Vol. III. p. 545. publiſhed at Paris. 1637.

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thor *immediately following*, [7] that St. Gregory's miniſtry was afterwards ſo ſucceſsful, that at his death he left only *ſeventeen unbelievers*. Here common candour, and the acknowledged fundamental laws of Hiſtory ſeem to have required that the ſubſequent ſucceſs of Chriſtianity ſhould have been related as well as the prevalence of Paganiſm, when St. Gregory was firſt called to his biſhopric.

A few more remarks ſhall cloſe the examination of this Chapter. The inattention of ſome eminent men to the evidences of Chriſtianity—the inattention "of the Pagan "and Philoſophic world" even "to thoſe "evidences which were preſented by the "hand of Omnipotence, not to reaſon, but "to their ſenſes," [8] occaſion much con-

[7] "Ce pendant la grace de Dieu opera telle-"ment par St. Gregoire qu'il convertit tout le peu-"ple tant de la ville que de la campagne et n'y laiſſa "en mourant que 17 payens." Ibid. The original paſſage may be found, as above, p. 574.

[8] "But how ſhall we explain or excuſe the ſu-

"pine

cern and ſurprize to our Author. Let him be comforted in [9] the one caſe by the remembrance of thoſe diſtinguiſhed converts to Chriſtianity whom he has himſelf enumerated. [1]. Let him ceaſe to wonder altogether at the inattention of the Pagan and Philoſophic world, while he recollects that the minds even of wiſe men were evidently filled with ſuch early prejudices as might eaſily prevent their lying open to conviction. If a variety of circumſtances combined to fix in the minds of the Pagans a

" pine inattention of the Pagan and philoſophic " world, to thoſe evidences which were preſented " by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reaſon, " but to their ſenſes?" Ch. xv. p. 517.

[9] " We ſtand in need of ſuch reflections to " comfort us for the loſs of ſome illuſtrious charac- " ters, which in our eyes might have ſeemed the " moſt worthy of the heavenly preſent." Ch. xv. p. 516.

[1] Ch. xv. p. 514.

rooted contempt for the very name [2] of Chriſtianity, they might eaſily alſo either overlook careleſsly, or reject obſtinately even it's ſenſible proofs. [3].

But a particular difficulty is alſo farther inſiſted on.

Both Seneca and Pliny "have recorded "all the great phenomena of nature, earth-"quakes, meteors, comets, and *eclipſes*, "which their indefatigable curioſity could "collect." [4] But they "have omitted "to mention" that particular eclipſe which is related to have happened at the time of the crucifixion.

[2] It was a common complaint of the firſt Chriſtians that they were perſecuted on account of *the name* only. Pliny's letter to Trajan very remarkably confirms this: "*Nomen ipſum, etiamſi flagitiis careat,* "an flagitia cohærentia nomini puniantur." — So literally was Chriſt's prophecy fulfilled, that his diſciples ſhould be perſecuted for *his name's ſake.* (St. John xv. 21.)

[3] See in anſwer to theſe difficulties, more fully Dr. Watſon's Apology, Letter V. p. 140—159.

[4] Ch. xv. p. 518. The places referred to are Sen. Queſt. Nat. I. 1, 15. vi. 1. vii. 17. Plin. N. H. II. 30.

Of

Of the three chapters referred to in Seneca, two of them treat only of comets and meteors, and one of earthquakes. But his diſquiſitions in this chapter relate only to ſuch earthquakes as had produced their uſual and dreadful effects in deſtroying cities and burying thouſands. His attention therefore cannot properly be ſuppoſed to have been directed to a far different kind of earthquake, which tho' it rent the rocks and divided the vail of the temple in twain, does not appear to have been attended with any ſuch conſequences as might entitle it to a place among that claſs of earthquakes which the Philoſopher alone conſiders. Of *eclipſes*, the more immediate ſubject of the preſent argument, *no one* of theſe chapters treats; nor have I been fortunate enough to diſcover even elſewhere, in the courſe of Seneca's laborious work, any enumeration of eclipſes "collected by his indefatigable curioſity." [5] But in Pliny, we are told "a diſ-

[5] Ch. xv. p. 518.

" tinct chapter is devoted to eclipſes of an " extraordinary nature, and unuſual dura- " tion," who " contents himſelf" nevertheleſs " with deſcribing the ſingular defect of " light which followed the murder of Cæ- " ſar." [6] As a ſufficient ſolution of the difficulty, we will repeat this *important* chapter, " devoted" as it is to eclipſes of that kind, among which it is contended the preternatural darkneſs in queſtion ought to have found a place.

" There are, ſays our Philoſopher, eclip- " ſes of an extraordinary nature, and un- " uſual duration, ſuch as that which fol- " lowed the murder of Cæſar, and in the " war with Antony, when a perpetual pale- " neſs covered the ſun almoſt throughout " the whole year." [7]

[6] Ibid.

[7] P. 158. Fiunt prodigioſi et longiores defectus; qualis occiſo Cæſare, et Antoniano bello, totius fere anni pallore perpetuo. Plin. Hiſt. Nat. Lib. II. c. 30. fol. edit. Paris. 1723.

It

It muſt now appear ſurely from the whole of the chapter, that it was not the Philoſopher's deſign to record all the moſt remarkable eclipſes that might be collected, but merely to confirm the general truth of his propoſition ſo far as not to leave it wholly without proof. Why he ſhould have fixed particularly on a traditional inſtance relating to Cæſar will eaſily be conceived when it is recollected how flattering the mention of it might prove, and that "this ſeaſon of obſcurity had already been "celebrated by moſt of the poets and hiſ-"torians of that memorable age." [8]

Had this latter objection been really formidable, it yet might have been ſufficient perhaps to have remarked that a mere ſilence concerning any fact, in perſons at leaſt but accidentally called on to make mention of it, cannot properly be conſidered as of any weight in oppoſition to the

[8] Ch. xv. p. 518.

poſitive

poſitive evidence of thoſe whoſe expreſs buſineſs it is to record it.

And we might have inſiſted farther on that "careleſs indifference," which, it is acknowledged, "the moſt copious and the "moſt minute of the Pagan writers have "ſhewn to the affairs of the Chriſtians." [9]

But we have no need to recur to ſuch ſolutions, when it appears that of the two philoſophers appealed to, the one has not any where deſignedly recorded eclipſes, and the other has only treated of them in ſuch a manner, as to give us no reaſon to expect the mention of the darkneſs of the paſſion,

[9] Ch. xvi. p. 530. — It is here proper to mention the remarkable error that our Author has fallen into in aſſerting (Note 24. p. lxxviii.) that "in the "various compilations of the Auguſtan Hiſtory (a "part of which was compoſed under the reign of "Conſtantine) there are not ſix lines which relate "to the Chriſtians." — In Dr. Lardner's Collection of Teſtimonies may be ſeen more than ſix *diſtinct paſſages* extracted out of theſe writers, relating to the Chriſtians. See Vol. III. p. 223.

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in preference to that of other inſtances which the hiſtory of his own nation ſupplied him with.

And even otherwiſe, " after all, (to adopt the judicious obſervation of a late writer) " to the bare ſuppoſition that theſe " Philoſophers were informed of this pro- " digy, we have a right to oppoſe the ſup- " poſition that they were not informed. " It is incumbent upon thoſe who maintain " that they muſt have received the earlieſt " intelligence of the prodigy, [1] to prove " the affirmative, rather than to put us upon " proving a negative. [2]

[1] Theſe are Mr. Gibbon's words, Ch. xv. p. 518.

[2] See Mr. Saliſbury's Tranſlation of Profeſſor Bullet's valuable Hiſtory of the Eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, with Notes by the Tranſlator, and ſome ſtrictures on Mr. Gibbons's Account of Chriſtianity, and it's firſt Teachers.—(Bathurſt, Fleetſtreet, 1777.) For a proof that Mr. Gibbon alſo has greatly exaggerated the Phænomenon of the darkneſs of the Paſſion ſee Dr. Watſon's Apology, Lett. V.—and that the darkneſs could not be total, is ingeniouſly ſhewn from

Before we enter on an examination of the remaining pages of our Author's diſquiſitions, it may be on ſome accounts proper to ſtate briefly the real importance of the argument they are concerned about. It may otherwiſe appear to ſome as needleſs as it is unpleaſant to be employed in fixing the charge of barbarity on Princes and on Magiſtrates, and in recalling to remembrance deeds which for the credit of human nature it were to be wiſhed, could be buried in oblivion.

To ſhew, ſo far as hiſtory really proves it, that the Roman Government ſubjected the profeſſion of Chriſtianity to many repeated and violent perſecutions, is to place the ſtrength of the Chriſtian cauſe in a very ſtriking light. Men cannot be imagined to have perſiſted in the profeſſion of their Religion, but from the fulleſt conviction of the Truth of the Hiſtory of it's

from ſeveral circumſtances out of Scripture in Mr. Salisbury's note quoted above.

evi-

evidences. — They appear to have ſuffered therefore in reality in defence of facts, not of opinions; and they afford an atteſtation to the Religion for which they died, that muſt be deemed ſtill ſtronger in proportion as their ſufferings, (thoſe ſufferings which might have been avoided by renouncing their Religion,) are ſeen to be the more grievous. The cruelty of the perſecutors of Chriſtianity affords therefore too important an argument in favour of it to be paſſed over in ſilence; and let it not after this be eſteemed therefore by any one a good-natured pleaſure to extenuate without reaſon the actions of thoſe Tyrants, by the concealment of whoſe barbarity both the faith of hiſtory is violated, and the cauſe of Chriſtianity alſo deprived of that evidence which juſtly belongs to it. In this light it affords juſt matter of complaint that our Author's deſcription of the conduct of the Roman Government towards the Chriſtians contains in reality a laboured Apology for it, rather than a diſintereſted relation of

mere facts. We find him indeed pleading the cauſe of Paganiſm with his utmoſt eloquence, as if retained in it's ſervice by ſome lawful obligation.

The guilt of the princes and magiſtrates of Rome is induſtriouſly palliated; the moſt ſtubborn proofs occaſionally turned aſide from their plain and natural ſignification, and the perſecuted Chriſtians conſidered in that light *only*, in which the moſt bigotted of their perſecutors would have placed them. It is every where ſuppoſed according to the ſpirit of the argument adopted, that the Chriſtians were acknowledged criminals, and without doubt merited the puniſhments inflicted on them. On this idea, the conduct of their perſecutors is apologized for, and "the indulgent ſpirit of Rome and of Po-"lytheiſm" [3] is extolled, either on account of the nature of the puniſhments they inflicted, or of the occaſional ceſſation of their cruelties.

[3] Ch. xvi. p. 558.

Yet

Yet the inoffenſive principles of the Chriſtians, conſidered as ſubjects, ſoon became ſufficiently known and experienced; and it behoved *every* ſovereign who regarded them as objects of puniſhment, to inquire previouſly into their religious principles, into the validity of thoſe reaſons which had induced them, in the language of our Author, to reject "the religion of "*nature*, of Rome, and of their anceſtors." [4] Had they made this inquiry, the Chriſtians might have replied that they conformed themſelves ſtrictly to the *genuine* religion of Nature, and that they had received a new divine revelation founded on the religion of nature, in conſequence of every poſſible proof of it's authenticity.

But it is not probable that the Pagans themſelves would have attempted to defend their ſyſtem by an appeal to the religion of nature, which they had long loſt ſight of amidſt the fictions of their poets, and their

[4] Ch. xvi. p. 570.

cuſtomary worſhip of deified *human* perſonages. They would have contented themſelves rather with their favourite plea of following the religion of their anceſtors and their country. [5] The ingenuity of modern times has advanced thoſe laboured ſophiſms in defence of polytheiſm which ſeem never to have occurred to polytheiſts themſelves. [6]

It is certain that the perſecutors of Chriſtianity did not inquire with candour into the grounds of that obſtinacy which they ſo haſtily condemned. And even their own proceedings, their omiſſion of puniſhment

[5] What deference was uſually paid to this conſideration among the ancients may appear from the doctrine even of the enlightened Socrates; who amidſt the moſt juſt and exalted ideas of the one true God, at the ſame time unhappily gave countenance to every various abſurdity of idolatry, by his well-known deciſion, that the Gods ought to be worſhipped, according to the cuſtoms of the ſtate. (Νομῳ πολεως.) See Xenoph. Mem.

[6] See the late Mr. Hume's Natural Hiſtory of Religion.

at

at one time (while the principles and conduct of the Chriſtians ſtill remained the ſame) nay their mitigation of it at another, ſerve to ſhew that they were in general conſcious of the injuſtice of inflicting puniſhment. [7]

It ought not to be omitted that our Hiſtorian aſcends beyond the proper limits of his hiſtory, to ſtate to us the perſecution under Nero. It is eaſier to ſee the reaſon

[7] It was on this ground, and ſurely with much reaſon, that Tertullian attacked the inconſiſtency of Trajan's proceedings. "O ſententiam neceſſitate "confuſam! negat inquirendos, ut innocentes, et "mandat puniendos ut nocentes. Parcit et fæ-"vit; diſſimulat, et animadvertit. Quid temet "ipſum cenſurâ circumvenis? Si damnas, cur "non et inquiris? Si non inquiris, cur non et ab-"ſolvis?" Apolog. c. 2. Our Author conſiders this cenſure (note 58. p. lxxx.) as inconſiſtent with his acknowledgment, that Trajan's reſcript was a relaxation of the ancient penal laws. But what inconſiſtency is there in acknowledging candidly what the emperor *had* done, but inſiſting at the ſame time that he ought to have done *more?*

of

of this digreſſion from his ſubject than to juſtify the propriety of it. The intent is to blot out if poſſible, from the page of hiſtory, one diſtinguiſhed perſecution of the Chriſtians by the aſſiſtance of a refined conjecture. [8]

To admit willingly that Tacitus compoſed his deſcription of Nero's cruelty at the diſtance of ſixty years from the event—

[8] "Moſt of the moderns," ſays our Author (note 124. p. lxxxiv.) have ſeized the occaſion" (ariſing from the uncertainty with regard to Aurelian's proceedings) "of *gaining* a few extraordinary "martyrs." May we not ſay that he himſelf uſes no leſs diligence on every occaſion, in trying to *aboliſh* the memory of reputed martyrs? "The dif-"ficulties with which it is perplexed" (p. 534.) are made a plea for the introduction of our Author's obſervations on the relation of Tacitus. But theſe difficulties are not pointed out to us; and other commentators, the accurate Lardner in particular, do not appear to have diſcovered any. For the remarkable errors that occur in our Author's tranſlation of the paſſage, ſee Mr. Wynn's Appendix to Dr. Watſon's Letters.

ſtill

ſtill let it be remembered that the event happened in his own life time, tho' it might be in his infancy. Would the true hiſtory of ſuch ſignal cruelty deteſted even by the Romans themſelves, have been forgotten in the courſe of one man's life? If this ſuppoſition cannot be admitted, if "THE ANNALIST" muſt have been informed of the real truth from "the narratives "of contemporaries," the character of "the "PHILOSOPHER" will but ill excuſe him for having diſguiſed it in complaiſance to the "knowledge or prejudices of the time "of Hadrian." [9]

[9] "At the diſtance of ſixty years it was the duty "of the annaliſt to adopt the narratives of contem-"poraries; but it was natural for the philoſopher "to indulge himſelf in the deſcription of the origin, "the progreſs, and the character of the new ſect, not "ſo much according to the knowledge or prejudices "of the age of Nero, as according to thoſe of the "time of Hadrian." Ch. xvi. p. 536.

By

If the conjecture ſhould be eſtabliſhed, the character of the Hiſtorian therefore is ſacrificed.

Let us turn now to the conjecture itſelf. It depends wholly on the uncertain poſition that the Chriſtians in the time of Nero were called GALILÆANS. I call it at leaſt uncertain, becauſe the teſtimony appealed to will not ſupport it ſufficiently for our Author's purpoſe. [1] It is rather in ſome ſort proved that the Chriſtians could not be called Galilæans in the reign of Nero.

Suidas informs us "that in the time of the emperor Claudius, (the predeceſſor of Nero) they who had *before* been called Nazareans and Galilæans, received a new name at Antioch, and were called Chriſtians." [2

[1] Dr. Lardner who is quoted (Vol. II. p. 132) has only proved that the Chriſtians were called GALILÆANS *before the time of Nero*, and again after it (on the teſtimony of one writer only) in the *third* century.

[2] Lardner (Jewiſh and Heathen Teſtimonies) Vol. II. p. 102 and 103. Suidas. V. Ναζηραῖοι.

Ther

There is no poſitive evidence to prove our Author's aſſertion, and there is very probable evidence to contradict the ſuppoſition.

Pliny, [3] Suetonius, and the emperor Adrian, at the beginning of the ſecond century, all uſe the appellation of Chriſtians.

And in the courſe of the ſame century the two Antonines, Celſus, and Galen, in their ſeveral teſtimonies each adopt the ſame title of diſtinction. [4] If we ſuppoſe the name of Galilæans to have been ſtill in uſe even after the times of Claudius, either during the reign of Nero or his ſucceſſors, this difficulty remains to be accounted for, how ſuch a variety of heathen writers ſhould all have made uſe of a different term.

But were we even to admit the ſuppoſition, the conjecture would ſtill be perplexed with material difficulties. Can it yet be conceived that the innocent Galilæans at *Rome* would be confounded with the guilty

[3] See Lardner.
[4] See the ſame Author.

zealots of *Judea*, whoſe rebellious conduct could not but diſtinguiſh them from thoſe peaceable ſubjects whoſe principles gave no offence?

The one were "the friends," the other "the enemies of human kind." [5] A difference of character too remarkable to be loſt under one general name, when the followers of Judas had their own proper diſtinction of zealots, if not, as ſome think of GAULONITES alſo.

May we not ſay alſo that a conjecture ſtarted in oppoſition to the moſt expreſs teſtimony reſts on very ſlight grounds, when it is to be ſupported by "the *extreme conciſeneſs*" [6] of the ſtile of the hiſtorian, however remarkable his conciſeneſs may be in matters of leſs importance? It muſt be

[5] Ch. xvi. p. 537.

[6] "We may therefore (that is on account of "Tacitus's extreme conciſeneſs) preſume to imagine "ſome probable cauſe which could direct the cruelty "of Nero, againſt the Chriſtians of Rome." Ch. xvi. p. 536.

eſteemed

eſteemed a very remarkable conciſeneſs in the hiſtorian, and ſurely a very culpable one, if in relating a fact which ſtood in need of every apology, he has truſted " to " the curioſity or reflection of his readers" [7] to ſupply the only apology that could be ſuggeſted for it. Here the character of Tacitus, as a faithful and accurate hiſtorian, is again ſacrificed in order to maintain at all events a favourite conjecture in behalf of one, " whoſe rage" it is confeſſed " had " been uſually directed againſt virtue and " innocence." [8]

We muſt not yet diſmiſs this celebrated paſſage. The mention of it's integrity has ſerved to introduce a ſevere deciſion concerning another celebrated teſtimony (not

[7] " Tacitus very frequently truſts to the curio- " ſity or reflection of his readers to ſupply thoſe in- " termediate circumſtances and ideas, which, in his " extreme conciſeneſs, he has thought proper to " ſuppreſs." Ch. xvi. p. 536.

[8] Ch. xvi. p. 537.

indeed on the ſame ſubject) in the works of Joſephus. " The paſſage concerning Jeſus " Chriſt, which was inſerted into the text " of Joſephus, between the time of Origen " and that of Euſebius, may furniſh," we are told, " an example of no vulgar for- " gery." [9] Perhaps we may borrow an argument from our Author himſelf in defence of this paſſage. If " the reputation of " Tacitus guarded his text from the inter- " polations of pious fraud," ſomething alſo ought to be attributed, in this reſpect, to the reputation of Joſephus. Both himſelf and his works were ſo well received among the Romans, that he was enrolled a citizen of Rome, and had a ſtatue erected to his memory. His writings were alſo admitted into the imperial library. It ſhould be remembered farther, that not only the Romans may be looked upon as the guardians of the integrity of his text, but that the

[9] Note 35. p. lxxviii.
[1] Ch. xvi. p. 535.

Jews

Jews alſo would certainly uſe all diligence to prevent any interpolation in favour of the Chriſtian cauſe. Yet it cannot be diſcovered that any objection was ever made to this paſſage in the earlier ages.

The various arguments of many learned writers will ſerve better to protect this paſſage from ſuſpicion. [2] And had our Author been careful to avoid either the imputation of interpoſing his own judgment too haſtily, or of concealing ſtudiouſly the important obſervations of others, he ſhould

[2] See in particular among many other Authors on this ſubject Cave's Hiſtoria Literaria — Dr. Wilſes's Two Diſſertations prefixed to L'Eſtrange's Joſephus, and Whiſton's Firſt Diſſertation prefixed to his own tranſlation. In each of theſe latter writers there may be found a critical analyſis of the paſſage. That in Whiſton is quoted from Daubuz de Teſtimonio Joſephi. Lond. 1706.—See alſo Bp Parker's Demonſtration of the Laws of Nature and Chriſtianity, which Dr. Lardner does not appear to have conſulted. It contains perhaps the beſt anſwer that can be found to ſuch objections as are principally inſiſted on.

have ſpoken of the queſtion as being ſtill undetermined. [3]

For my own part, when I conſider it's agreement with the general ſtile of Joſephus, [4] the long undiſputed title it en-

[3] Dr. Lardner, while he openly controverts the authenticity of the paſſage by many learned arguments, adopts however a very different language. "This paſſage is received by many learned men as "genuine. By others it is rejected as an interpola-"tion. It is allowed on all hands, THAT IT IS IN "ALL THE COPIES OF JOSEPHUS'S WORKS NOW "EXTANT, BOTH PRINTED AND MANUSCRIPT. "Nevertheleſs it may be for ſeveral reaſons called "in queſtion." Vol. I. ch. iv. p. 151. — A very "candid and complete ſtate of the arguments on "*each* ſide may be found in Vernet, Traité de la "Religion Chretienne. Sect. VII. ch. 11. Dr. Lardner has not given us the anſwers that have been offered to his objections, nor, what is very remarkable, does he appear to have conſulted the work of Daubuz.

[4] See this accurately ſtated by Daubuz, whoſe criticiſm may be found in Havercamp's edition as well as Whiſton's tranſlation. He examines every phraſe and almoſt every word; and ſhews that there is

joyed through the courſe of fifteen centuries, [5] and how much every objection raiſed againſt it reſts only on preſumptive proofs, [6] while poſitive evidence may be

is nothing introduced in this little hiſtory for which we have not good authority in other parts of his works.

[5] The firſt who mentioned their ſuſpicions are ſaid to have been Gifanius and Oſiander in the ſixteenth century. The vehement attack of Tanaquil Faber followed in the next century.

[6] One of the principal objections inſiſted on is drawn from the *ſilence* of Origen and other of the Fathers concerning this paſſage. The words of Bp. Parker ſeem to deſerve attention. "This is the "hard condition that our critics have of late put "upon all authors, to quote all that ever they read, "and to think of every thing that is pertinent to "their cauſe; but this ſeems too ſevere an impoſi-"tion upon the memories of mankind. Some of theſe Fathers alſo could not have quoted this paſſage with propriety, according to the nature of their deſign: it is the evident deſign of Juſtin Martyr and Tertullian to diſpute againſt the Jews, purely out of the writings of the *prophets*. — Perhaps too the reaſoning of Dr. Lardner himſelf, mutatis mutandis, may well be applied on this occaſion. "Suppoſing

Joſephus

produced in it's favour from the conſent of the moſt ancient manuſcripts, I cannot but incline to the ſide of thoſe writers who are ſatisfied that it is not an interpolation. If it be a forgery, I agree with our Author that it is "no vulgar forgery." [7] But

"Joſephus not to have ſaid any thing of Jeſus Chriſt, "ſome may aſk, what could be the reaſon of it? And "how can it be accounted for? To which I might "anſwer, that ſuch a queſtion is rather more *curious* "than judicious and important." (Teſtimonies, Vol. I. ch. iv. p. 168.

[7] Some of the objections that ſeem principally to have influenced our Author in forming his opinion are perhaps eaſily removed. Why ſhould it excite our wonder ſo particularly that Joſephus has born witneſs to the miracles and reſurrection of Jeſus, when Celſus himſelf has done the ſame? That Joſephus expreſsly acknowledges him to be the Meſſiah we cannot grant. St. Jerome's verſion (in the fourth century) renders this part of the paſſage not *hic erat Chriſtus*, but *hic credebatur eſſe Chriſtus*. And Joſephus elſewhere ſays of Moſes, "that his "legiſlation which was from God, made this man "to be thought *ſuperiour to his own nature*. (Antiq. L. iii. c. xv. 3.) The ſeveral objections of this claſs

to return from the digreſſion which this note has occaſioned.

" Whatever opinion may be entertained " of his conjecture," ſays our Author, " it " is evident that the effects, as well as the " cauſe of Nero's perſecution, were con-

claſs may be found fully refuted in an excellent vindication of this paſſage lately publiſhed under the title of VINDICIÆ FLAVIANÆ, and printed for B. White. It is particularly deſigned to obviate the objections that have been raiſed from the ſuppoſed internal evidence of the paſſage. There is a ſingular remark in it, ſurely of ſome force, that Faber the moſt violent champion of the oppoſite cauſe always quotes that part of the paſſage which has been alluded to above, as if it ſtood ὅτος ην ὁ χριστος, whereas the order really is ὁ χριστος ὅτος ην. The one, it may be inſiſted on, ſignifies literally " This man was Chriſt ;" the other certainly may be very naturally interpreted to ſignify " Chriſt was this man"— the perſon called Chriſt was the man whom I deſcribe. It is well obſerved (ibid. p. 28.) that the word Chriſtus is capable of a twofold acceptation, either as a mere name or title of diſtinction, or as importing eminently the Meſſiah.

" fined to the walls of Rome." [8] Let us rather ſay that many different arguments, which ought not certainly to have been ſuppreſſed, ſeem to prove ſatisfactorily that the Chriſtians ſuffered under the perſecuting hand of Nero in the *provinces*, as well as the city.

His own proof (and the only proof) is, that the Spaniſh inſcription in Gruter is a manifeſt and acknowledged impoſition. [9] This is at leaſt far from being *univerſally* acknowledged. [1]

In any caſe however other arguments demand our attention. It has been obſerved

[8] Ch. xvi. p. 537.

[9] Note 42 p. lxxix.

[1] Dr. Lardner acknowledges the authenticity of this inſcription to be doubtful, but is himſelf ſtrongly inclined to receive it as genuine. Vol. I. Ch. iii. p. 335.—Among the poſitive advocates for it's authenticity may be reckoned Walchius de Perſecutione Neronianâ, who gives very ſatisfactory anſwers to the principal objections made—and Profeſſor Bullet in the work already quoted (p. 188 of Mr. Saliſbury's tranſlation).

that

that Suetonius in ſpeaking of the puniſhments of the Chriſtians under Nero, does not ſay particularly that they were "puniſh-"ed *at Rome*, or for ſetting fire to the city. His expreſſions are general; and Oroſius, a Chriſtian writer of the fifth century, ſays expreſsly that Nero "ordered the Chriſtians "to be tormented throughout *all the pro-*"*vinces* by a like perſecution." [2]. We learn alſo from Sulpicius Severus that laws were paſſed in the time of Nero to forbid the profeſſion of Chriſtianity. [3] Even thoſe who contend that theſe laws were repealed by the Senate after his death, neceſſarily acknowledge that there were ſuch

[2] Primus Romæ Chriſtianos ſuppliciis et mortibus affecit, ac per omnes provincias pari perſecutione excruciari imperavit. L. vii. C. 7.

[3] Hoc initio in Chriſtianos ſæviri cæptum. Poſt etiam datis legibus religio vetabatur: palamque edictis propoſitis Chriſtianum eſſe non licebat.

Sulp. Sev. Hiſt. L. ii. c. 4.

Laws. [4] We would aſk now whether it is juſtly aſſerted by our Author, with reſpect to Nero, that "the religious tenets "of the Chriſtians were never made a ſub-"ject of puniſhment, or even of inqui-"ry." [5]

His attempt to defend the cauſe of Nero is ſucceeded by an apology for Domitian. It is doubted whether this Emperor any more than Nero can be ranked among the perſecutors of Chriſtianity. We will refer the queſtion wholly to the unſuſpected teſtimony of an Heathen Hiſtorian, which, important as it is, our Author hath paſſed over in ſilence. He has produced his teſtimony ſo far only as it relates to Clemens and Domitilla; yet in the very *ſame* paſſage it follows *immediately* that "on a like accu-

[4] See Moſheim de Rebus Chriſtianis, &c. Sect. ii. vii. Suetonius alſo mentions Nero's proceedings againſt the Chriſtians along with other *ordinances* and *inſtitutions*.

[5] Ch. xvi. p. 537.

"ſation

" ſation MANY OTHERS were alſo condemn-
" ed. Some of them were put to death,
" others ſuffered the confiſcation of their
" goods." [7] It ſhould ſeem now that the cruelty of Domitian may juſtly be branded " with the name of the ſecond perſecu-
" tion." [8]

Nor can we free the memory of Trajan, however his reſcript to Pliny ſerved to abate the violence of the proceedings againſt the Chriſtians, from having himſelf carried on a *third* perſecution. He ordains that " they
" ſhould not be ſought for, but he ordains

[6] Επενηχθη δε αμφοιν εγκλημα αθεοτητος, εφ' ᾗς καὶ ΑΛΛΟΙ ες τα των Ιουδαιων ηθη εποκελλοντες ΠΟΛΛΟΙ κατεδικασθησαν. Και οἱ μεν απεθανον, οἱ δε των ουσιων εστερηθησαν· Dion. Hiſt. L. 67.

[7] Ch. xvi. p. 539. From the criticiſm of Moſheim already referred to, and from the opinion of of Dodwell (Diſſ. Cyprianicæ Diſſ. xi.) both founded on a remarkable paſſage of Tertullian (" eæ leges quas Trajanus ex parte fruſtratus eſt") it may be collected with much probability, that DOMITIAN as well as NERO had paſſed edicts againſt the Chriſtians.

" alſo

"alſo, that if any were brought before "him, they ſhould be puniſhed." [9] "Al-"though there was no open perſecuti-"on," ſays Euſebius ſpeaking of Trajan's edict, "there were perſecutions in ſeveral "places and provinces, and there were "many faithful men who underwent divers "kinds of martyrdom." [1] It is well known, Ignatius was one of theſe. The mention of theſe circumſtances ought not to have been paſſed over by our Author, in treating profeſſedly "of the conduct "of the Roman Government towards the "Chriſtians, from the reign of Nero to "that of Conſtantine." [2] May we not ſay alſo that the effects of the perſecutions of Hadrian and Antoninus ſhould

[9] "Si deferantur, et arguantur puniendi ſunt."

[1] Εσθ' ὁπη μεν των δημων, εσθ' ὁπη δε κὴ των κατα χωρας αρχοντων, τας καθ' ἡμων συσκευαζομενων επιβουλας, ὡς κὴ ανευ προφανων διωγμων, μερικους κατ' επαρχιαν εξαπτεσθαι, πλειους τε των πιστων διαφορας εναγωνιζεσθαι μαρτυριοις. H. E. Lib. III. xxxiii.

[2] See Title of Ch. xvi.

have

have been taken notice of, as well as the edicts of their clemency. Euſebius informs us on the authority of Melito Biſhop of Sardis, that Antoninus ſent his reſcripts in favour of the Chriſtians to the following cities by name, Lariſſa, Theſſalonica, Athens, and in general thro' all Greece. [3] Hence there ſeems to ariſe a plain proof that in theſe places more eſpecially the Chriſtians had been perſecuted.

But we cannot but wonder ſtill more that ſuch ſlight mention ſhould have been made of the very dreadful and extenſive perſecution which was carried on under Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. [4] It raged in the oppoſite extremities of the empire. The remarkable Epiſtle of the Church of Smyrna bears witneſs to it's fury in the Eaſt, and the relation of the Churches of

[3] H. E. L. IV. C. xxii.

[4] I do not find any other mention made of it, than *indirectly* in theſe words. "Marcus deſpiſed the "Chriſtians as a philoſopher, and *puniſhed* them as a "ſovereign." Ch. xvi. p. 556.

Lyons

Lyons and Vienne tranſmitted to their brethren in Aſia, is a laſting monument of the ſufferings of the Chriſtians in Gaul. [5] It is in alluſion to this perſecution that Euſebius ſays, a conjecture may be formed of the great multitudes of martyrs throughout the world, from what happened in one nation. [6] Let it be remembered alſo, that "*the accidental tempeſt*" [7] which was ſtirred up by the edict of Severus deſigned only to prevent the farther progreſs of Chriſtianity, raged for a time with much violence; and

[5] See Euſebius's Hiſtory. L. iv. C. xv. and L. v. C. i.—iii. Theſe Epiſtles have lately been republiſhed in Engliſh, with many judicious notes by the Tranſlator.

[6] —μυριαδας μαρτυρων ανα την οικουμενην διαπρεψαι στιχασμω λαβειν ενεστιν, απο των καθ ἑν εθνος συμβεβηκοτων·
Euſeb. H. E. Proœm. ad L. v.

[7] "But the laws which Severus had enacted "ſoon expired with the authority of that emperor; "and the Chriſtians, after this accidental tempeſt, "enjoyed a calm of thirty-eight years."
Ch. xvi. p. 538.

that

that even "this mitigated perſecution" [8] yet breathed certainly a very unjuſtifiable ſpirit of intolerance.

We ſhall now follow our Author in his reflections on the conduct of the Roman Princes and Magiſtrates, as to the nature and order of their proceedings.

Their bold Apologiſt has not heſitated to affirm that "they were moderate in the "uſe of their puniſhments." [9]

It is indeed true that the Chriſtian often had the alternative of life and death ſet before him. It is true he might meet with pardon; but it was a pardon offered to one who was conſcious of no crime. It was a pardon offered on terms, however they may appear "eaſy" [1] to our Author, which

[8] "In this mitigated perſecution we may ſtill "diſcover the indulgent ſpirit of Rome and Poly-"theiſm." Ch. xvi. p. 538.

[9] Ch. xvi. p. 530.

[1] "Puniſhment was not the inevitable conſe-"quence of conviction, and the Chriſtians whoſe "guilt was the moſt clearly proved by the teſtimony

could not be complied with. It mattered not to him whoſe conſcience forbad his compliance altogether, whether he was called upon to make open ſacrifice of his faith, "by caſting a few grains of incenſe upon "the altar," or by proſtrating himſelf ſolemnly before ſome deteſted idol. The very "applauſe" [2] which he might expect, would in effect prove that he was no leſs underſtood to have made an explicit renuncation of his faith in the one caſe than in the other. The proper queſtion therefore will be, whether thoſe who impoſed on their inoffenſive ſubjects the cruel neceſſity of betraying their conſciences in order to ſave

"of witneſſes, or even by their voluntary confeſſion, "ſtill retained in their own power the alternative of "life or death. It was not ſo much the paſt offence "as the actual reſiſtance, which excited the indig-"tion of the magiſtrate. An *eaſy* pardon was grant-"ed to repentance; and if they conſented to *caſt a* "*few grains of incenſe upon the altar*, they were diſ-"miſſed from the tribunal with ſafety and with *ap-*"*plauſe*." Ch. xvi. p. 543.

[2] See the laſt quotation.

their

their life can be at all defended; not whether the terms propoſed might in ſome ſort be conſidered rather as "a legal evaſion" [3] than a formal declaration. It has been well ſaid that in ſome caſes *action* is a kind of *ſpeech of the body*; and it ſhould ever be remembered, that it was not the profligate criminal, but the inoffenſive citizen; it was not the daring enemy of ſociety, but the friend of mankind, that was the victim of the various puniſhments of Roman cruelty.

The weakneſs of ſuch apologies for the conduct of the Roman Magiſtrates as we have been conſidering, will perhaps beſt appear by ſhewing to what purpoſes they may be applied. They will ſerve to juſtify even the proceedings of Papal Tyranny.

[3] "They (the magiſtrates) frequently declined "the odious task of perſecution, diſmiſſed the charge "with contempt, or ſuggeſted to the accuſed Chriſ-"tian ſome *legal evaſion*, by which he might evade "the ſeverity of the laws. Ch. xvi. p. 545.

It may be ſaid of theſe likewiſe, that " *puniſhment was not the inevitable conſequence* " *of conviction*, and that the perſecuted Pro- " teſtants *ſtill retained in their own power the* " *alternative of life or death.*" Might the Chriſtians eſcape " by caſting a few grains of " incenſe on the altar ?" In many caſes alſo, it is probable even the fiery zeal of modern Bigotry would have accepted of ſome external act, ſuch as the adoration of the Hoſt, as a ſufficient compliance. Did " *the* " *humane judge frequently condeſcend to ſolicit,* " *nay to intreat the priſoners, that they would* " *would ſhew ſome compaſſion to themſelves,* " *to their families, and to their friends ?*" [4]

[4] " It was eſteemed the duty of a humane judge " to endeavour to reclaim, rather than to puniſh " thoſe deluded enthuſiaſts. Varying his tone, ac- " cording to the age, the ſex, or the ſituation of the " priſoners, he frequently condeſcended to ſet before " their eyes every circumſtance which could render " life more pleaſing, or death more terrible ; and " to ſollicit, nay to intreat them, that they would " ſhew ſome compaſſion to themſelves, their families, " and to their friends." Ch. xvi. p. 544.

The

The ſame alſo was done by the bloody perſecutors in Queen Mary's reign. But like the Roman Judge alſo, " *if threats and per-* " *ſuaſions proved ineffectual*" they " *had re-* " *courſe to violence*; *the ſcourge and the rack* " *were called in to ſupply the deficiency of ar-* " *gument, and every art of cruelty was em-* " *ployed to ſubdue ſuch inflexible obſtinacy.*" [5]

But there are yet other ſtriking inſtances of clemency, which in our Author's opinion decorate the annals of Roman perſecution. Death was by no means the puniſhment on all occaſions. Theſe *humane* Judges " contented themſelves for the moſt part " with the milder chaſtiſements of impri- " ſonment, exile, or ſlavery in the mines;" [6] nay more than this, thoſe who en-

[5] " If threats and perſuaſions proved ineffectual, " he had often recourſe to violence; the ſcourge and " the rack were called in to ſupply the deficiency of " arguments, and every art of cruelty was employed " to ſubdue ſuch inflexible, and as it appeared to " Pagans, inflexible obſtinacy." Ibid.

[6] Ch. xvi. p. 554.

dured

dured this *mild* puniſhment " were per-
" mitted, by the humanity or the *negli-*
" *gence* of their keepers, to build chapels,
" and freely to profeſs their religion, in the
" midſt of thoſe dreary habitations." [7]

There may be thoſe, we conclude, who are not ſenſible of the clemency of the princes and magiſtrates of Rome; who find no comfort for the perſecuted, in the reflection that " the tranſient perſecutions that were " carried on ſerved only to revive the zeal " and reſtore the diſcipline of the faithful" [8] (through the peculiar virtue of the faithful themſelves) who think it no apology for unjuſt cruelty, that " the moments " of extraordinary rigour were compenſated

[7] Ch. xvi. p. 583. From Euſebius (de Mart. Pal. c. 13.) it appears that even this indulgence gave offence. The governor of Paleſtine complained to Maximin of their enjoying this liberty. In conſequence of the complaint, they were diſperſed into different parts, and treated with additional cruelty.

[8] Ch. xvi. p. 555.

" by

" by much longer intervals of peace and " ſecurity." [9]

Such will perhaps remark, that to contend for the humanity of the Roman magiſtrates by alleging that they inflicted only impriſonment, exile, or ſlavery, on their inoffenſive ſubjects, when they might have inflicted death, can only be conſidered as an attempt to prove that they were not inhuman, by ſhewing that they might have been more inhuman.

Our Author has indeed elſewhere made uſe of ſome very palpable fallacies nearly of the ſame nature. He plainly means to ſuggeſt an argument in favour of the judicial proceedings of the Roman Magiſtrates, by turning our attention to the proceedings of a *modern inquiſitor*. [1] And he cloſes his

[9] Ch. xvi. p. 555.

[1] " A modern inquiſitor would hear with ſur- " priſe, that whenever an information was given to " a Roman Magiſtrate of any perſon within his ju- " riſdiction who had embraced the ſect of the Chriſ- " tians, the charge was communicated to the party " ac-

work by reminding us that Chriſtians in later times " have inflicted far greater ſeve-
" rities on each other than they had expe-
" rienced from the zeal of infidels." [2] From this latter obſervation, if it be intended to lead to any concluſion, no other concluſion in point of argument can be collected, than that the greater and more inexcuſable crimes of Chriſtians tend to leſſen the guilt of other ſimilar, tho' not equal crimes in Pagans. A concluſion that cer-

" accuſed, and that a convenient time was allowed
" to ſettle his domeſtic concerns, and to prepare
" an anſwer to the crime which was imputed to
" him." Ch. xvi. p. 553.

[2] " We ſhall conclude this chapter by a me-
" lancholy truth which *obtrudes itſelf on the reluctant*
" *mind*; that even admitting without heſitation or
" inquiry, all that hiſtory has recorded, or devotion
" has feigned, on the ſubject of martyrdoms, it
" muſt ſtill be acknowledged, that the Chriſtians, in
" the courſe of their inteſtine diſſenſions, have inflic-
" ted far greater ſeverities on each other, than they
" had experienced from the zeal of Infidels."
Ch. xv. p. 585.

tainly

tainly cannot be admitted. If no uſe was intended to be made of the obſervation, ſince it obtruded itſelf " on *the reluctant* " *mind*," why has it not been wholly concealed? The deteſtable horrors of modern perſecutions cannot too much or too often be expoſed: but in theſe inſtances the cenſures that are paſſed on them are fallacious.

And in fact, when the humanity of the Roman Magiſtrates is extolled, becauſe they inflicted puniſhments leſs cruel than death, the poſition itſelf may be denied as well as the concluſion which it is deſigned to lead to. In the later perſecutions of the Chriſtians the refined cruelty of their enemies purpoſely avoided inflicting death on them in order to inflict puniſhments on them, which they themſelves thought more formidable. The words of a learned writer, who while he has laboured to leſſen the number of actual Martyrs among the firſt Chriſtians, has not been inſenſible of their real ſufferings, may ſerve to place this matter in it's proper light.

" The conduct of their perſecutors, in " ſtudiouſly avoiding to inflict death, that " they might make their torments more " cruel and protract them to a longer du- " ration, produced this effect, that the " fewer martyrdoms there were, the more " illuſtrious the confeſſions became, and " rivaled the fame of the martyrdoms of " other times. And as the perſecutors " thought to elude by this art of inflicting " the moſt dreadful tortures, [3] but no

[3] The various cruelties of ſometimes burning the ſinews of the knees and ſometimes burning out the eyes, as is particularly related by Euſebius (de vitâ Conſt. l. i. c. 58. and elſewhere) were in general adopted inſtead of inflicting death.—Lactantius's words are too remarkable to be omitted. — " Illud " vero peſſimum genus eſt, cui clementiæ ſpecies " falſa blanditur; ille gravior, ille ſævior carnifex " qui neminem ſtatuit occidere. Itaque dici non " poteſt, hujuſmodi judices quanta, et quam gravia " tormentorum genera excogitaverint, ut ad effec- " tum propoſiti ſui pervenirent. Hæc autem non " tantum ideo faciunt, ut gloriari poſſint nullum ſe " innocentium peremiſſe (nam et ipſe audivi aliquos " gloriantes, quia adminiſtratio ſua in hâc parte " fuerit

" deaths, the infamy of a bloody admini-
" ſtration, they indulged their native cruel-
" ty the more freely, without the hazard of
" loſing their character." [4]

Amidſt the horrors of ſuch ſcenes, one is naturally led to wiſh to find them exaggerated. But while we avoid carefully the legendary inventions of later ages, while we ſeek not to extend the reputed number of holy Martyrs beyond the ſtricteſt letter of authentic evidence, we owe it to their memory, we owe it to the cauſe of our reli-

" fuerit incruenta) ſed et invidiæ cauſâ; ne aut ipſi
" vincantur, aut illi virtutis ſuæ gloriam conſequan-
" tur." (Inſt. Divin. L. v. 11.)

To the ſame purpoſe is his character of Maximin's conduct, in another work. " Nam cum clementiam
" ſpecie tenus profiteretur, occidi ſervos Dei vetuit,
" debilitari juſſit. Itaque confeſſoribus effodieban-
" tur oculi, amputabantur manus, pedes detrunca-
" bantur, nares vel auriculæ deſecabantur." (De Mort. Perſec. xxxvi.)

[4] Dodwelli Diſſert. Cyprianicæ. (Diſſ. xi.) It ſhould be obſerved that his arguments tend chiefly to leſſen the number of martyrs as ſtated in *modern* martyrologies.

gion itſelf, not to abandon the teſtimony that is afforded us, or admit too haſtily ſuch objections as are not valid.

While I ſhall not therefore in any ſort enter fully into the queſtion cnncerning the numbers of the primitive Martyrs, I ſhall yet ſo far attempt a diſcuſſion of it, as to point out the uncertainty, if not fallacy of ſuch arguments as our Author has alleged in ſupport of his calculations.

Here, we come firſt to conſider a paſſage of Origen which ſeems to have been looked upon at all times by thoſe who have ſought to leſſen the numbers of the noble army of Martyrs, as the very Palladium of their cauſe. Yet in the manner it has been uſually alleged, it contains the moſt palpable fallacy. In the writings of Mons'r de Voltaire it may be found continually repeated, but always without making a neceſſary diſtinction with regard to the age in which Origen flouriſhed. In our Author it is ſtated thus.

" The

" The learned Origen, who from his ex-
" perience as well as reading was intimate-
" ly acquainted with the hiſtory of the
" Chriſtians, declares in the moſt expreſs
" terms, that the number of martyrs was
" very inconſiderable." [5] In the quota-
tion of the paſſage itſelf, where it is ſaid,
" his words deſerve to be tranſcribed," [6]
we cannot but wiſh that our Author had
been of opinion that the *whole* paſſage had
deſerved to be tranſcribed. The latter part of
the ſentence, which he has omitted, is altoge-
ther neceſſary towards affixing a right ſenſe
to the former. " A few only," ſays Origen,
" at different times, and ſuch as may very ea-
" ſily be numbered have died for the Chriſ-
" tian Religion;" but he adds, " God for-
" bidding that *the whole race of them* ſhould
" be ſubdued." [7] It now ſeems plain

[5] Ch. xvi. p. 546.

[6] Note 71. p. lxxx.

[7] Ολιγοι κατα καιρους κ σφοδρα ευαριθμητοι περι της χριστιανων θεοσεβειας τεθνηκασι, κωλυοντος Θεου το παν εκπολε-

that Origen in this paſſage conſiders the number of Chriſtian Martyrs only as *compared* with the whole body of Chriſtians. In this ſenſe they may readily be acknowledged to have been few; but no argument ſeems to ariſe from hence with regard to their number *abſtractedly* conſidered. We might here ſeemingly reſt the cauſe.

But when we recollect farther, that Origen lived before the time of the ſevereſt and longeſt perſecutions that the Church experienced, in this reſpect at leaſt, the weight of his teſtimony, ſhould we even allow our adverſaries to make their own uſe of it, is at once materially diminiſhed. It cannot be admitted as of any force with regard to the number of Martyrs *in general*, ſince it cannot extend to the perſecutions either of Decius or Diocletian. [8]

πολεμηθηναι αυτων εθνη. Origen. contra Celſum. Lib. iii. p. 116. edit. Spenceri.

[8] Dodwell in the uſe of this teſtimony, has been more accurate than our Author; he has added the words "*ante ſuam ætatem.*"

The

The perſecution under Decius is univerſally acknowledged to have been one of the moſt rigid in the annals of the firſt ages. And that a far greater number of Martyrs than had ſuffered in any perſecution before, muſt have periſhed in the courſe of the long perſecution which commenced under Diocletian muſt naturally be concluded.

But "the general aſſertion of Origen," it is added, "may be explained and con-"firmed by the particular teſtimony of his "friend Dionyſius, who in the immenſe "city of Alexandria, and under the rigo-"rous perſecution of Decius, reckons only "ten men and ſeven women who ſuffered "for the profeſſion of the Chriſtian name." [9] One of the ſeventeen "was likewiſe "accuſed of robbery." [1]

We ought not perhaps to conclude neceſſarily that no more than theſe ſuffered, becauſe theſe only are made mention of. They

[9] Ch. xvi. p. 546.
[1] Note 74. p. lxxxi.

may

may have been ſelected purpoſely as the moſt illuſtrious inſtances of martyrdom on the occaſion. The reaſons however are apparent why a ſmaller number of Martyrs ſuffered here than in other places. Many, it is expreſsly related to us, fled from the ſtorm, and on the other hand the determined reſolution of ſome deterred the Governor from continuing the perſecution. "A whole band of ſoldiers," ſays Euſebius, "prevented others from laying hold "of them, and ran forward ſaying they "were Chriſtians; ſo that the Governor "and his aſſeſſors became frightened." [2]

But even in any caſe the ſmall number of Martyrs made mention of here can at leaſt only afford room for *conjecture*, and we have poſitive teſtimony of a different nature which remains hereafter to be con-

[2] Αθροον δε τι συνταγμα ερπιπτον--πριν τινας αυτων αλλους λαβεσθαι φθασαντες επι το βαθρον ανεδραμον, ειναι Χριστιανοι λεγοντες· ως τον τε ηγεμονα και τους συνεδρους εμφοβους γενεσθαι· H. E. L. vi. C. xli.

ſidered.

ſidered. In the mean time let us not neglect to do that juſtice to the memory of one of the ſeventeen Martyrs at Alexandria, which he has not met with at the hands of our Author. "He was likewiſe *accuſed* of "robbery." It is indeed true that he was at leaſt accuſed of living with robbers. But the very paſſage from whence this information is collected repreſents the accuſation as *falſe*. It acquaints us that after having *cleared* himſelf of this *very improbable* accuſation, he came bound to the Governor on an information laid againſt him, as being a *Chriſtian*. Yet his unjuſt judge having inflicted double tortures on him to what he did on the robbers, cauſed him to be burnt between robbers. [3] We cannot but be greatly ſurprized at theſe remarkable *omiſſions*.

[3] Νεμεσιων δε τις κακεινος Αιγυπτιος εσυκοφαντηθη μεν ως δη συνοικος λησων· ΑΠΟΔΥΣΑΜΕΝΟΣ δε ταυτην παρα τω εκατονταρχω την ΑΛΛΟΤΡΙΩΤΑΤΗΝ κατ' αυτου διαβολην, καταμηνυθεις ως χριστιανος, ηκε δεσμωτης επι τον ηγουμενον. ὁ δε αδικωτατος διπλαις αυτον ἡ τους λησας

 ταις

The publication of the edict of Diocletian, by which it was enacted that the Churches of the Christians should every where be destroyed — that they themselves should be excluded from the benefits of public justice, —and be condemned to death should they presume to hold any secret assemblies for the purpose of religious worship, [4] was followed by a very remarkable circumstance. No sooner was it affixed in a public and conspicuous place of the city, than the daring hand of a zealous Christian tore it down.

Eusebius and Lactantius, to whose histories our Author refers to authenticate his own description, have both of them recorded this transaction. They have neither of them made any the least mention of the general sentiments of the Christians concerning it. Yet we are told expressly and without reserve, that " *the Christians*, though

ταις βασανοις καὶ ταις μαστιξι λυμηναμενος μεταξυ των λεστων κατεφλεξε· Euseb. E. H. L. vi. C. xli.

[4] Ch. xvi. p. 569.

they

" they confeſſed that his conduct had not " been ſtrictly conformable to the laws of " *prudence*, [5] admired the divine fervour " of his zeal; and the exceſſive commen- " dations which they laviſhed on the me- " mory of their hero and martyr, contri- " buted to fix a deep impreſſion of terror " and hatred in the mind of Diocletian."

No authority whatſoever is produced to juſtify this picture of the imprudent zeal of the Chriſtians, and we preſume that none can be produced from any *ancient* hiſtory. When we are told that " the Greeks cele- " brate his memory under the name of " John," [6] and are referred to Tillemont (who himſelf refers to Bollandus) two diſtinct matters are evidently confounded. The reſpect that *later* martyrologies have ſhewn

[5] Lactantius when he delivers his own opinion, ſays more than that the action was not *prudent*— that it was *wrong* in itſelf: " etſi non *rectè*, magno tamen animo." (De Mort. Perſec. C. xiii.)

[6] Note 153. p. lxxxvi.

to the memory of this daring Chriſtian, has no real connection with the ſentiments of the Chriſtians of the *ſame* age.

This deſcription, unſupported as it is by any proper teſtimony, ſeems the rather to deſerve notice, becauſe ſome other paſſages alſo of our Author's work tend to fix a like charge of contumacy and diſobedience on the firſt Chriſtians, without ſufficient reaſon.

" On ſome particular occaſions," we are told, " when the magiſtrates were exaſpe-
" rated by ſome perſonal motives of inte-
" reſt or reſentment, when the zeal of the
" martyrs urged them to forget the rules of
" prudence and perhaps of decency, to
" overturn the altars, to pour out impreca-
" tions againſt the Emperors, *or to ſtrike the*
" *Judge as he ſat on his tribunal*, it may be
" preſumed that every mode of torture
" which cruelty could invent, or conſtancy
" could endure, was exhauſted on thoſe de-
" voted victims." [7]

[7] Ch. xvi. p. 583.

The

The behaviour of Ædeſius to Hierocles præfect of Egypt, is here alluded to. [8] But even this *ſingle* inſtance at leaſt affords no certain proof that the enraged Martyr *ſtruck* the Judge as he ſat on his tribunal. Euſebius's words are ſomewhat obſcure, and may admit of very different interpretations, but they at leaſt make no expreſs mention of this circumſtance. Let the paſſage ſpeak for itſelf. After deſcribing the various cruelties that Ædeſius had ſeen inflicted by the Judge, and the inſults and reproaches that he had heaped on venerable men, the Hiſtorian relates that " he advanced boldly, " and *when he had covered the Judge with* " *ſhame and diſhonour by words and deeds*, af- " ter having endured bravely a variety of " torments, was thrown into the ſea. [9]—

[8] Note 178. p. lxxxvii.

[9] ὁτι δη αφορητα ειναι αυτω τα γινομενα εδοκει, παρα ςηματι θαρσαλεω προσεισι· ΛΟΓΟΙΣ ΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΕΡΓΟΙΣ ΓΟΝ ΔΙΚΑΣΤΗΝ ΑΙΣΧΥΝΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΤΙΜΙΑ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΩΝ, &c. (Euſeb. H. E. de Mart. Pal. C. v.) In our

What his *deeds* were is at leaſt not ſpecified, whence the accuſation laid againſt him is at leaſt founded on conjecture only.

We are concerned again to vindicate the Chriſtians from a charge of reſiſtance of which there is not the leaſt trace to be diſcovered in the very writers appealed to. We ſhall contraſt a plain tale with the fanciful relation which our Author has given us.

" In a ſmall town of Phrygia, of whoſe " name as well as ſituation we are left ig- " norant, it ſhould ſeem that the magiſtrates " and the body of the people had embraced " the Chriſtian faith; and as ſome reſiſt- " ance might be apprehended to the execu- " tion of the edict, the governor of the " province was ſupported by a numerous " detachment of legionaries. On their ap- " proach the citizens threw themſelves into " the Church *with the reſolution either of de-*

our Author's Note, the words αισχυνη ϗ ατιμια are *omitted.*

" *fending*

" *ſending with arms that ſacred edifice, or of*
" *periſhing in it's ruins. They indignantly re-*
" *jected the notice and permiſſion which was*
" *given them to retire,* till the ſoldiers, pro-
" voked by their obſtinate refuſal, ſet fire
" to the building on all ſides, and conſum-
" ed by this extraordinary kind of martyr-
" dom a great number of Phrygians, with
" their wives and children." [1]

Lactantius relates this tranſaction thus. " Some (perſecutors) have been forward to " ſlay; as one in Phrygia who burnt all " the people together with the conventicle " itſelf." [2] Euſebius ſets the matter before us in ſtill more dreadful colours. " The ſoldiers ſurrounding a *whole city* of " of Chriſtians together with the men in " in it, and having thrown fire into it, " burnt them together with their children

[1] Ch. xvi. p. 574.

[2] Aliqui ad occidendum præcipites extiterunt; ſicut unus in Phrygiâ qui univerſum populum cum ipſo pariter conventiculo concremavit.

Lact. Inſt. L. v. C. ii.

" and

"and wives, while they invoked Chriſt the "God of all." [3] In neither of theſe accounts is there any mention made of the reſolution of the Chriſtians to defend their Church, nor of the permiſſion given them to retire. [4] We are obliged to remark therefore that our Hiſtorian has himſelf in-

[3] Ηδη γȣν ὁλην Χριςιανων πολιχνην αυτανδρον αμφι την Φρυγιαν εν κυκλω περιβαλοντες οπλιται πυρ τε υφαψαντες, κατεφλεξαν αυτȣς αμα νηπιοις ϗ γυναιξι, τον επι παντων Θεον Χριςον επιβοωμενȣς·

Euſeb. E. H. L. viii. C. xi.

[4] This latter circumſtance is reported by our Author entirely on the credit of Rufinus's ancient tranſlation of Euſebius. (See Note 160. p. lxxxvii) Rufinus's work is rather a paraphraſe than a tranſlation, and thoſe many additions which he indulges himſelf in the liberty of making continually to the text of the hiſtory, can only be received properly as his own ſentiments. Since however his authority has been appealed to, the *ſucceeding* ſentence to that in which he introduces the above circumſtance, might perhaps have deſerved attention. "Et hoc in *cives* "perpetratum eſt, quod ſi in *hoſtes* egiſſet, notam "crudelitatis haberet." L. viii. C. xi.

troduced

troduced one of theſe circumſtances into his narrrative, without the leaſt countenance from the writers whom he expreſsly refers to. The other reſts only on the ſingle authority of Rufinus's tranſlation of Euſebius, [5] neither Euſebius himſelf nor Lactantius having made any mention of it.

To attend now to our Author's calculation of the number of Martyrs in the perſecution under Diocletian, his aſſociates, and ſucceſſors. His calculation is founded on Euſebius's Catalogue of the Martyrs of Paleſtine. [6]

It may perhaps appear that the ſuperſtructure is too weighty for the foundation. It may at leaſt be diſputed whether the paſſage of Euſebius can be ſaid to contain that poſitive evidence which our Author

[5] Note 4. above p. 216.

[6] "From the hiſtory of Euſebius it may be "collected, that only nine biſhops were puniſhed "with death; and we are aſſured by his particular "enumeration of the Martyrs of Paleſtine, that no "more than ninety-two Chriſtians were intitled to "that honourable appellation." Ch. iii. p. 384.

has aſcribed to it. It is certain, that he does not expreſsly ſay *no more than* ninety-two Chriſtians ſuffered.

His words are, "theſe were" (not there were *no more than theſe*) the martyrdoms inflicted in Paleſtine. [7] It may not improbably be ſuggeſted, from the method which he uſes on other occaſions, that he does not mean his catalogue ſhould be looked upon as complete. He ſometimes ſelects out of many martyrdoms a few only diſtinguiſhed by ſome eminent circumſtances for particular mention. And we may obſerve in the preſent inſtance, that the Martyrs of Paleſtine whom he has enumerated are all diſtinguiſhed either by their ſuperiour characters, or by the peculiar circumſtances of their ſufferings, and their exemplary fortitude in enduring them.

A ſtronger argument may be derived from his own words, as they immediately

[7] Ταυτα μεν τα κατα παλαιστινην εν ὁλοις τοις οκτω ετεσι συμπερανθεντα μαρτυρια.
Euſeb. de Mart. Pal. C. xiii.

follow

follow the paſſage in queſtion. He proceeds, " ſuch was the perſecution which began " amongſt us with the deſtruction of the " Churches, and which afterwards roſe to " a great height by the ſucceſſive perſecu- " tions of the governors, in which the va- " rious trials of thoſe who contended for the " faith raiſed up an *an innumerable multi-* " *tude of Martyrs* in *every* province, in the " countries that reach from Africa, and " throughout all *Egypt*, [8] and Syria, and " from the Eaſt, and round about to the " region of Illyricum." [9]

[8] Hence may be collected the great prevalence of Chriſtianity in Egypt within half a century after the time of Origen, if not in his own time. See above, p. 147.

[9] Τοιȣτος ὁ καθ' ημας διωγμος, αρξαμενος μεν ἀπο της των εκκλησιων καθαιρεσεως, εις μεγα δε προκοψας, εν ταις κατα χρονȣς των αρχοντων επαναστεσιν· εν αἱς πολυτροποι καὶ πολυειδεις των υπερ ευσεβειας ηθληκοτων αγωνες ανηριθμον τι πληθος μαρτυρων κατα πασαν επαρχιον συνεστησαντο εν τοις ἀπο λιβυης καὶ δι' ὁλης αιγυπτȣ, συριας τε, καὶ της απ' ανατολης, καὶ κυκλω, μεχρι το κατα το ιλλυρικον παρατεινȣσι·

Euſeb. de Mart. Pal. C. 13.

If then the ſenſe of the paſſage in reſpect of the ſupport that has been borrowed from it for our Author's hypotheſis be but uncertain, let it be remembered that "the important concluſion" he draws concerning the number of Martyrs is in conſequence uncertain; if it ſhould be thought that the teſtimony of Euſebius conſidered altogether neceſſarily leads us to conclude that there were either more than ninety-two who ſuffered in Paleſtine, or that very great numbers ſuffered in other provinces, let it be remembered that the concluſion is falſe.

The declaration of Euſebius elſewhere indeed appears even to our Author "to "contradict his moderate computation," but he endeavours to obviate this objection by exhibiting a ſevere accuſation againſt the hiſtorian.

We ſhall willingly admit that the words ἱσορησαμεν and καταμειναντας are altogether as ambiguous as he has repreſented them. [1]

[1] "The ixth chapter (called by an error of the preſs in Mr. G.'s Note, the vth) of his viiith book, "which

Concerning the ſenſe attributed to the firſt, it matters little indeed whether we admit it or not. If Euſebius only *heard* of the many Martyrs that he makes mention of, inſtead of *ſeeing* them ſuffer, his teſtimony is ſtill

" which relates to the province of Thebais in Egypt, " may ſeem to contradict our moderate computation; " but it will only lead us to admire the *artful* ma- " nagement of the Hiſtorian. *Chuſing* for the ſcene " of the moſt exquiſite cruelty, the moſt remote and " ſequeſtered ſcene of the Roman empire, he relates " that in Thebais, from ten to one hundred perſons " had frequently ſuffered martyrdom in the ſame " day. But when he proceeds to mention his own " journey into Egypt, his language inſenſibly be- " comes more cautious and moderate. Inſtead of a " large, but definite number, he ſpeaks of many " Chriſtians (πλειους) and moſt artfully ſelects two " ambiguous words (ἱστορησαμεν and καταμαθειν) which " may ſignify either what he had ſeen or what he " had heard, either the *expectation* or the execution " of the puniſhment. Having thus provided *a ſecure* " *evaſion*, he commits the equivocal paſſage to his " readers and tranſlators; juſtly conceiving that " their piety would induce them to prefer the moſt " favourable ſenſe. Note 181. p. lxxxvii.

ſufficient

ſufficient, while his general character remains unimpeached. Nay it muſt be allowed that as he was himſelf on the ſpot he muſt have poſſeſſed the very beſt means of information. Indeed the word ſignifies *to hear*, only ſo far as it ſignifies to hear in conſequence of *inquiry*. In the very next ſentence, ſpeaking of the ardour of the Martyrs, he expreſsly ſays he *ſaw* it. [2] After this ſtate of the real force of the word in queſtion, ſurely Euſebius may be acquitted of the charge of having adopted it as being capable of a double ſenſe, merely from conſidering how little advantage could be gained by ſuch equivocation. Reſpecting the latter word, we preſume that the Hiſtorian will at once ſtand acquitted of the ſevere charge of "providing to himſelf a "ſecure evaſion" in the equivocal ſenſe of it,

[2] ὁτε καὶ θαυμασιωτατῳ ὁρμῃ θειαν τι ως αληθως δυναμιν καὶ προθυμιαν των εις τον Χριστον τȣ Θεȣ πεπιστευκοτων συνεωρωμεν.

Euſeb. E. H. L. viii. C. ix.

when

when it is ſhewn that one of the two ſenſes attributed to it is palpably inconſiſtent, even to a degree of abſurdity, with the reſt of the ſentence. To evince this, let us adopt for a moment the ſenſe which it is ſuppoſed capable of and apply it to the paſſage in queſtion. It will then ſtand thus:

" We ourſelves alſo, when we were on " the ſpot, ſaw (or heard of) many in one " day ſome of whom EXPECTED to be be- " headed, and ſome to ſuffer by fire; ſo " that the murderer's ſword became blunt- " ed, and unable to perform it's office, and " the executioners themſelves, thro' fatigue, " ſucceeded one another by turns." [3]

The rhetorical figure in the latter part of this paſſage muſt be conſidered as altoge-

[3] Ἱστορησαμεν δε κ αυτοι, επι των τοπων γενομενοι πλειους αθροως κατα μιαν ημεραν, τους μεν της κεφαλης ἀποτομην υπομειναντας, τους δε την διὰ πυρος τιμωριαν· ως αμβλυνεσθαι φονευοντα τον σιδηρον, ατονουντα τε διαθλασθαι· αυτους τε τους αναιρουμενους ὑποκαμνοντας αμοιβαδον αλληλους διαδεχεσθαι· Euſeb. Lib. viii. cap. 9. (De iis qui in Thebaide paſſi ſunt.)

ther

ther extraordinary, if it can be maintained that the Hiſtorian meant to provide himſelf a ſecure evaſion, by perſuading his readers, if neceſſary, that the executioners were tired and their ſwords blunted, from their *attendance* to execute the puniſhment which others EXPECTED but never underwent.

It ought to be added too, that in the beginning of the very ſame chapter, and in that preceding it, Euſebius has again made uſe of the ſame word in ſuch a manner, that if we give a like ſenſe to it, we muſt fall into a like abſurdity. In the one paſſage we muſt underſtand him to ſpeak only of calamities which the MARTYRS [4] in Thebais EXPECTED, tho' he adds immediately that they were tormented to death; [5] and

[4] The very word μαρτυρες might be ſufficient to aſcertain the ſenſe of this paſſage, ſince Euſebius is remarkably accurate in diſtinguiſhing between martyrs and confeſſors. (ομολογητων)

[5] Παντα δ' υπεραιρει λογον, κ᾽ ὰς ΥΠΕΜΕΙΝΑΝ αικιας κ᾽ αλγηδονας οἱ κατα Θηβαιδα μαρτυρες ασπαζοις αυτο

in the other to aſſert only that numbers *expected* different deaths, though it is ſubjoined that ſome of theſe were *drowned*, ſome *ſtarved*, ſome *burnt*, and ſome *crucified*. [6]

May we not conclude then that this accuſation ſerves to refute itſelf by it's own inſufficiency, and to exhibit a very unhappy inſtance of refined criticiſm? [7] It fol-

αντι ενυχων ὁλον το σωμα κ᾽ μιχρις ΑΠΑΛΛΑΓΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΒΙΟΥ κρεμαζομενοι.

Euſeb. de Mart. Pal. L. viii. C. ix.

[6] Ενθα ΜΥΡΙΟΙ ΤΟΝ ΑΡΙΘΜΟΝ ανδρες αμα γυναιξιν κ᾽ παισιν υπερ της τε Σωτηρος ἡμων διδασκαλιας τε προσκαιρε ζην καταφρονησαντες, ἀμφορευς ΥΠΕΜΕΙΝΑΝ θανατες· οἱ μεν αυτων μετα ξισμες κ᾽ τριβολωσεις μαστιγας τε χαλεπωτατας, κ᾽ μυριας αλλας ποικιλας κ᾽ φρικτας ακροσεις ὑπομενοντες ΠΥΡΙ ΠΑΡΑΔΟΘΕΝΤΕΣ· οἱ δε ΠΕΛΑΓΕΙ ΚΑΤΑΒΡΟΧΙΣΘΕΝΤΕΣ· αλλοι δε ευθυμως τοις αποτεμνουσι τας εαυτων προτεινοντες κεφαλας· οἱ δε ΕΝΑΠΟΘΑΝΟΝΤΕΣ ταις ὑποσπονδοις· οἱ δε ΛΙΜΩ ΔΙΑΦΘΑΡΕΝΤΕΣ·

Euſeb. E. H. L. viii. C. viii.

[7] I do not take notice of our Author's reflection on the artful management of the Hiſtorian in *chooſing* Thebais for his ſcene, (ſee paſſage quoted above, p. 220.) ſince till it can be *proved* that Thebais was not the ſcene of ſuch cruelty, the whole is a mere beg-

lows that it muſt be believed, that the ſeveral Martyrs ſpoken of actually *underwent* the puniſhments deſcribed.

But a yet heavier attack on the venerable Hiſtorian remains behind. "The graveſt "of the eccleſiaſtical Hiſtorians Euſebius "himſelf," ſays our Author, "very frankly confeſſes, that he has related whatever "might redound to the glory, and that he "has ſuppreſſed all that could tend to the "diſgrace of religion." [8]

Let us at leaſt hear Euſebius in his own defence before we utterly condemn him. We may however venture to aſſert, that there is an inconſiſtency in the accuſation, even at firſt ſight, upon the ſtrength of a teſtimony which our Author cannot but admit. When he *himſelf* informs us "of "THE CORRUPTION OF MANNERS AND "PRINCIPLES" among the firſt Chriſtians)

ging of the queſtion; nor can I make a compliment of *granting* it.

[8] Ch. xvi. p. 583.

"ſo

" ſo FORCIBLY LAMENTED by Euſebius," [9] I am totally at a loſs to reconcile the Hiſtorian's conduct on this occaſion, with that of one who ſuppreſſes all that can tend to the diſgrace of his cauſe. For once at leaſt, even his accuſer muſt confeſs that the Hiſtorian has been very remarkably inconſiſtent with himſelf.

Still however, his own words as *they ſtand repreſented to us* muſt upon the whole ſerve to condemn him, if no more favourable interpretation of them can juſtly be adopted. Some alleviation of the charge at leaſt, I preſume, rather an entire refutation of it may be derived from permitting Euſebius to ſpeak for himſelf more fully in the paſſages referred to. As his character is at ſtake, in the tranſlation I ſhall give I ſhall prefer exactneſs to elegance.

After deſcribing a variety of affecting circumſtances that had attended the perſecutions of the firſt Chriſtians, as *ſeen by himſelf*

[9] Ch. xvi. p. 564.

in the firſt of the two paſſages, he proceeds thus :

" But it is not our part to deſcribe the " ſad calamities which at laſt befel them, " ſince it does not agree with our plan to " relate their diſſentions and wickedneſs, " before the perſecution ; on which account " we have determined to relate nothing " more concerning them than may ſerve to " juſtify the divine judgment. We there- " fore have not been induced to make men- " tion either of thoſe who were tempted in " the perſecution, nor of thoſe who made " utter ſhipwreck of their ſalvation and " were ſunk of their own accord in the " depths of the ſtorm ; but ſhall only add " thoſe things to our general hiſtory, which " may in the firſt place be profitable to our- " ſelves, and afterwards to poſterity." [1]

[1] Αλλα τȣτων μεν ȣχ ἡμετερον διαγραφειν τας επι τελει σκυθρωπας συμφορας· επει και τας προθεν του διωγμου διαστασεις τε αυτων εις αλληλȣς, και ατοπιας, ȣχ ἡμιν οικειον μνημη παραδιδοναι· διο και πλειον ȣδεν ἱστορησαι περι αυτων εγνωμεν, η δι' ὡν αν την θειαν δικαιωσαιμεν κρισιν·

ȣκουν

On a candid examination of this paſſage may we not ſay that no juſt accuſation againſt Euſebius can be deduced from it? He explains his own plan conſiſtently; he conſiders himſelf according to it not as a complete Hiſtorian of the times, but rather as a *didactic* [2] writer, whoſe main object it is to make his work, like the Scriptures themſelves, PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE. As he treats only of the affairs of the church, the plan ſurely is at leaſt excuſable, perhaps peculiarly proper; and if he has

ȣκοιω ȣδε των προς τȣ διωγμȣ πεπειραμενων, η των εις απαν της σωτηριας νεναυγηκοτων, αυτη τε γνωμη τοις του κλυδωνος εναπορριφεντων βυθοις μνημην ποιησασθαι προηχθημεν, μονα δε εκεινα τη καθολȣ προσθησομεν ἱστορια, α πρωτον μεν ἡμιν αυτοις, επειτα δε ϗ τοις μεθ' ἡμας, γενοιτ' αν προς ωφελειας.

Euſeb. Lib viii. C. 2.

[2] His own declaration, made elſewhere, of his reaſons for relating the martyrdoms that had been inflicted, confirms this idea. — ȣχ ἱστορικην αυτο μονον, αλλα ϗ ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΙΚΗΝ περιεχον διηγησιν.]

Procœm. ad Lib. v. E. H.

been

been but faithful in relating thoſe facts which fall within the compaſs of his deſign (nor is any direct accuſation as yet brought againſt him in this reſpect) he is ſo far at leaſt conſiſtent with himſelf, and may ſo far be depended on for his relation of facts. Nay more, he will appear even to have conformed himſelf to that juſt idea of the principal duty of hiſtory, according to which, as elegantly ſtated by our Author, "it undertakes to record the tranſactions of the paſt, for the INSTRUCTION of future ages." [3] And let it be remarked ſtill farther, that neither can he well be ſaid to have "ſuppreſſed all that could tend to the diſgrace of religion," who, while according to his more immediate deſign he has not indeed particularly related ſuch tranſactions, has yet openly acknowledged them.

This, as well as the expreſs nature of his deſign, will appear yet farther on conſidering the other paſſage.

[3] Ch. xvi. p. 529.

Euſebius

Euſebius here again expreſsly mentions "diſſentions among the Confeſſors themſelves," but again declares that it is his intent "to paſs over all theſe things" agreeably to his former declaration. He then quotes the very words of ſcripture as beſt deſcriptive of his immediate deſign. "Whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things "are of good report, if there be any virtue "and if there be any praiſe," theſe things he thinks it moſt ſuitable to an Hiſtory of Martyrs to lay before his readers. [4]

I truſt now, Euſebius may ſtill lay claim to the character of a faithful hiſtorian. Unleſs an Author's right to chooſe his own ſubject can be conteſted, (and that too, for

[4] Ταυτα παντα παρησειν μοι δοκω ανοικειον εμαυτω κρινας, παραιτουμενω τε κ) αποφευγοντι, ως δ'αν κ) αρχομενω μοι ειρηται τ)ων περι τουτων διηγησιν· αλλα γαρ οσα σεμνα κ) ευφημα κατα τον ιερον λογον κ) ει τις αρετη κ) επαινος, ταυτα λεγειν τε κ) γραφειν κ) πιστοις ακροασις παρεχεσθαι οικειοτατον ηγουμενω τη των θαυμασιων μαρτυρων ιστορια·

Euſeb. de Mart. Pal. C. 12.

the

the particular benefit of his reader) no accuſation can lie againſt him from his own declaration *fairly interpreted.* It is plainly impoſſible to reconcile the expreſs words of the charge exhibited with any part of either of the paſſages appealed to in ſupport of it. [5]

[5] There is a remarkable agreement between the interpretation which Mr. Gibbon has adopted, and the French tranſlation of Monsr. Couſin. "He "(Euſebius) has related whatever MIGHT REDOUND "TO THE GLORY, and ſuppreſſed all that could "tend to the diſgrace of RELIGION," are the words of the former. "Ne voulant donc rien mettre de-"vant les yeux de fideles, que ce qui peut RELEVER "L'HONNEUR DE NOTRE RELIGION," are the words in which the latter according to his looſe method of interpretation has choſen to expreſs what forms the ſubſtance of full three preceding ſentences; and has at the ſame time miſled his readers wholly as to the true ſenſe of his author.

I leave it to others to account for this ſtriking ſimilarity between the interpretations of Mr. Gibbon and Monsr. Couſin. (Hiſt. Eccleſiaſtique de l'Euſebe, &c. 4to. Paris. 1675.)

But

But the character of Enſebius ſeems indeed to have been peculiarly obnoxious to our Author. At the cloſe of his work he is tranſported beyond the uſual temper of his writings, and riſes into a ſtile of the ſevereſt declamation againſt the pious Hiſtorian. He is ſtiled a courtly Biſhop, and a paſſionate declaimer. [6]

Our Author has however fortunately himſelf furniſhed us with a ſtrong caſe in point, that may ſerve to render the vague imputa-

[6] — " if Grotius ſhould be convicted of exag-
" gerating the merit and ſufferings of the Reformers,
" we ſhall be naturally led to inquire, what confi-
" dence can be placed in the doubtful and imperfect
" monuments of ancient credulity; what degree
" of credit can be aſſigned to a *courtly Biſhop*, and *a*
" *paſſionate declaimer*, who under the protection of
" Conſtantine, enjoyed the excluſive privilege of
" recording the perſecutions which Chriſtianity had
" experienced from the *vanquiſhed rivals* or diſre-
" regarded predeceſſors of their gracious ſovereign."
Ch. xvi. p. 586.

tion thrown upon the character of Euſebius in ſome degree at leaſt improbable.

In the very ſame inſtance in which, to adopt onr Author's phraſe, " *it ſuited the* " *purpoſe* [7] of Lactantius to place the " death of Maxentius among thoſe of the " perſecutors," Euſebius has exempted even this " *vanquiſhed rival*" of Conſtantine from the charge of perſecution.

Yet how natural was it for " *the paſſionate* " *declaimer*," according to the idea our Author has given of him, to have caught fire on the occaſion and availed himſelf of his

[7] " The revolt of Maxentius immediately re- " ſtored peace to the Churches of Italy and Africa ; " and the ſame tyrant who oppreſſed every other " claſs of his ſubjects, ſhewed himſelf juſt, humane, " and even partial towards the afflicted Chriſtians." Ch. xvi. p. 577. — Euſebius's authority is referred to in ſupport of this deſcription of Maxentius's conduct. (Note 167. p. lxxxvii.) " But, (it is added) " as Maxentius was vanquiſhed by Conſtantine, it " ſuited the purpoſe of Lactantius to place his death " among thoſe of his perſecutors."

" *ex-*

" *excluſive privilege*" [8] to ſtain the memory of this moſt diſtinguiſhed rival of his " gracious ſovereign" with all poſſible infamy.

Lactantius was diſtinguiſhed by the favour of Conſtantine as well as Euſebius; but it could not certainly have *ſuited the purpoſe* of the one, leſs than of the other, to place Maxentius in the moſt odious light. It may not perhaps be impoſſible to reconcile in ſome degree the different accounts of theſe two Authors. Though the prudence of the tyrant led him to tolerate the Chriſtians as a ſect, yet his acknowledged cruelties towards his ſubjects in general, [9] may well be conceived to have been occaſionally exerciſed on ſome at leaſt among the Chriſtians. Lactantius perhaps thought that facts of this kind juſtified him in placing

[8] See paſſage quoted above p. 233.

[9] See him ſtiled by our Author, in the paſſage quoted above (p. 234.) " a tyrant who oppreſſed " every other claſs of his ſubjects."

his death among thoſe of the perſecutors; Euſebius, even *courtly* and *paſſionate* as he was, choſe rather to relate his general conduct than to dwell on particular facts.

In the inſtance under conſideration then Euſebius ſeems by no means to have acted the part of the *courtly Biſhop*. And on the other hand the imputation itſelf is wholly unſupported by particular proofs. One expreſs accuſation however is urged againſt his character, tending to reflect upon it in another light. "The prudence of the Hiſ-"torian," it is ſaid, "has expoſed his own "character to cenſure and ſuſpicion. It "was well known that he himſelf had "been thrown into priſon; and it was ſug-"geſted that he had purchaſed his deliver-"ance by ſome diſhonourable compliance. "The reproach was urged in his life time, "even in his preſence, at the council of "Tyre." [1]

[1] Note 177. p. lxxxvii.

It

It ſhould have been added ſeemingly that the ſuggeſtion was made by a declared Adverſary. It is to be remarked alſo, that it was a *ſuggeſtion* only founded on a queſtion put to him how he had eſcaped from priſon and perſecution without any honourable wounds to ſhew, unleſs he had either actually offered ſacrifice to Idols, or had engaged to do it. [2] No direct accuſation was exhibited, which however, had there been any certain grounds for it, would doubtleſs have been inſiſted on. On the other hand it may eaſily be conceived that he might, like ſome others, have had the good fortune of being ſet at liberty without any farther ſufferings; and it is highly im-

[2] Λεγε δε μοι συ, ȣ σαν εμοι ησθα ἐν τη φυλακη επι τȣ διωγμȣ; καγω μεν οφθαλμον απεβαλομην υπερ αληθειας· συ δε ȣτε φαινη λελοβημενον τι εχων εν τω σωματι, ȣτε εμαρτυρησας· αλλα εστηκας ζων μηδεν ηκρωτηριασμενος. πως ανεχωρησας ἀπο της φυλακης, ει μη ὁτι υπεσχȣ τοις την αναγκην τȣ διωγμȣ ἡμιν επενεγκασι το αθεμιτον πραξαι, ἡ επραξας; Epiph. adv. Hæres. (Hæreſ. lxviii.)

probable

probable from the general well known deciſion of the Church in ſuch caſes, that had his Apoſtaſy been known, he would have riſen to thoſe high honours which he attained, or been admitted at all indeed to any other than Lay-Communion: we may aſk therefore, amidſt ſuch circumſtances, whether a mere ſurmiſe, and that from a declared adverſary, ſeems to deſerve any credit?

Having now accompanied our Author to the cloſe of his laborious work, let us turn back to eſtimate the true nature and force of his diſquiſitions, by ſuppoſing for a moment the utmoſt ſucceſs to have attended them.

They contain an attempt to account for the growth of Chriſtianity, from the end of the *ſecond* [3] century, by the aid of human cauſes. They tend to leſſen the ſuppoſed numbers of the firſt Chriſtians, while they

[3] See remarks at the beginning of this tract. P. 3.

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unavoidably ſhew at the ſame time that their numbers were conſiderable. Other teſtimonies not adduced by our Author confirm the ſame idea. [4] They tend to apologize for the conduct of the Roman Government towards their perſecuted ſubjects, even from the time of Nero, (while the immediate ſubject of the Hiſtory takes it's date only from the time of the Antonines, more than a century later) but they have not ſerved to fix on the Chriſti-

[4] There is a very remarkable teſtimony, in particular, of the *Apoſtate* Julian, the declared enemy of Chriſtianity. He ſuppoſes, that there were in *many cities of Greece and Italy multitudes of believers in Jeſus*, before John wrote his Goſpel. See the paſſage quoted by Dr. Lardner, Vol. IV. Ch. xlvi. Though we may have ſome reaſon to ſuſpect the zealous temper of Tertullian of a degree of exaggeration, his teſtimony is yet too ſtriking to be omitted. " Heſterni ſumus, et veſtra omnia implevimus, " urbes, inſulas, caſtella, municipia, conciliabula, " caſtra ipſa, tribus, decurias, ſenatum, forum; " ſola vobis relinquimus templa, Apol. C. xxxvi.

ans

ans in general the imputation of any notorious crimes. They tend to cenſure the charitable ſentiments and the private vices of a few individuals, but they bear witneſs in a general view to "the pure morals of "the Chriſtians." [5]

[5] See Ch. xv. p. 450. Our Author himſelf has obſerved that Julian (Ep. xlix.) ſeems mortified, that "the Chriſtian Charity maintains not only their *own*, "but likewiſe the *Heathen* poor." (Note 140. page lxxiii.) Such a teſtimony from the avowed enemy of Chriſtianity is very ſtriking; and ſuch diſtinguiſhed benevolence muſt have ſuggeſted a very favourable idea of the Religion that enjoined it. But we know not why a mercenary turn ſhould be given to the motives of thoſe converts who may be ſuppoſed to have been influenced by the ſplendour of Chriſtian benevolence. "The proſpect of immediate relief "and of future protection allured into it's hoſpitable "boſom many of thoſe unhappy perſons, whom the "neglect of the world would have abandoned to the "miſeries of want, of ſickneſs, and of old age." (Ch. xv. p. 498.)—If the proſpect of relief allured them, the proſpect of perſecution muſt ſurely have deterred them in an equal degree.

What

What then, if our Hiſtorian had ſucceeded in eſtabliſhing even every one of his poſitions? — We had ſtill remained in full poſſeſſion of all the moſt important evidences of our Religion, of the evidence even of it's MIRACULOUS PROPAGATION during the Age of the Apoſtles, and of the extraordinary continuance of it for at leaſt a century afterwards. We had ſtill ſurveyed with pleaſure the general characters of the the firſt Chriſtians, and ſufficient occaſion had been given us for admiring the amazing fortitude of ſome thouſands of Martyrs [6] and of a far greater number of Confeſſors.

[6] Our Author's own calculation of the number of Martyrs in *one* perſecution amounts to about fifteen hundred; "a number," ſays he, "which if it "is equally divided between the ten years of perſe-"cution will allow an *annual conſumption* (ſuch is the indecent and unfeeling expreſſion which has fallen from his pen) "of one hundred and fifty Martyrs." (Ch. xvi. p. 585.) Taking in every other perſecution, we may ſafely ſay *many* thouſands.

But what ſhall we ſay then, if our Author ſhould be found to have failed altogether in his attempt to account for the growth of Chriſtianity even during a later period of it, by *human* cauſes; if his ſeveral cauſes appear to be either inadequately or improperly alleged, if his conjectures are inadmiſſible, and his arguments in general far more plauſible than ſolid? The ſpirit indeed of his remarks will perhaps appear principally to have deſerved notice; but however the cauſe of Chriſtianity in general had in reality ſtill remained unaffected by our Author's diſquiſitions, it's cauſe was yet too ſacred to ſubject it even in appearance to any diminution of it's proper ſtrength and ſupport. It became therefore neceſſary to endeavour to offer an antidote even to exploded objections, ſince the intereſts of Religion are too important not to lay claim to continual defence; ſince not to advance to meet the enemy as often as he returns to the charge, would be in ſome ſort

ſort to abandon the field, and to acknowledge tacitly the ſuperiority of his forces.

The defects of evidence which our Author's Hiſtory labours under required ſtill farther animadverſion. One of the moſt eminent Hiſtorians of this age has pronounced of Hiſtory in general, in alluſion to our Author's own opinion, that "he who "delineates the tranſactions of a remote "period has no title to claim aſſent, unleſs "he produces evidence in proof of his aſ-"ſertions.—Without this he may write an "amuſing tale, but cannot be ſaid to have "compoſed an authentic hiſtory." [7]

We ſhall not apply this maxim improperly, when we aſſert ſtill farther, that he who abounds in partial and erroneous quotations, however he may have preſerved the appearance, has yet ſo far in reality produced no evidence in proof of his aſſertions.

[7] Preface to Dr. Robertſon's Hiſtory of America, p. xv.

FINIS.

Lately publiſhed by the ſame Author,

THE CHARACTER OF THE LAWS OF ENGLAND CONSIDERED.

A SERMON preached at the Aſſizes held at Oxford,

Before THE HONOURABLE MR. BARON EYRE and MR. BARON PERRYN.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of THE JUDGES.